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Imperial Fascism: Ideology, Practice, and Transmission in the Mediterranean, 1934-1943

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Imperial Fascism: Ideology, Practice, and Transmission in the Mediterranean, 1934-1943

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Dedication

To my parents, for all their support

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Imperial Fascism: Ideology, Practice, and Transmission in the Mediterranean, 1934-1943

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This study seeks to explore the nature of imperial fascism, particularly those projects carried out by Italian and French fascists and authoritarians in North Africa from 1934 to 1943. In the wake of world war and a worldwide depression, these fascists were mindful of the limitations of the territorial nation-state, and believed that imperial structures would have to be created and maintained in order to protect the sovereignty of their nations. A shared set of ideas about the past and future of the Mediterranean provided French and Italian rightists an ideological opportunity to cooperate, but geopolitical differences and national egoism ensured that each would go their own way. With the failure of the so-called "Latin union", both the French and Italian rightists sought to convince North Africans that only the far-right could bring about modernity while protecting Islam from secularism and communist atheism. While most North Africans rejected the fascist advances, some responded positively for a variety of reasons, though generally in ways that failed to correspond to the fascist visions of a new geopolitical order. In a bid to show their respect for Islam, fascists also employed several strategies to govern North African Muslims; foremost of these were the attempts to integrate the elites into youth

organizations and a greater involvement in supporting Islamic practices in ways that depoliticized religion and linked it to the state. The governing techniques, despite attenuating some critiques of colonialism, did little to stem the growing desire for independence. Furthermore, the fascist rejection of liberal norms and values was unacceptable to most North Africans who hoped to either greatly reform colonial structures or to gain self-determination. Though French and Italians failed to legitimize their imperial projects, studying their attempts highlights the various ways in which fascists adjusted their ideas and practices in order to carry out transnational and imperial politics.

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Note on Transilateration and Translation

When possible, Arabic names and words have been transliterated using the IJMES system, without long vowel indications and diacritical marks. At times, when the Arabic original is not available, names are given with the often rough and inconsistent spellings used in French and Italian documents. All translations are my own, unless they lead to a reference in English.

Introduction

During the interwar years and into World War II, fascists and authoritarian rightists sought to re-establish the basis of flagging imperial structures. Even with the introduction of a League of Nations Mandate system which presupposed the eventual independence of numerous peoples, and the rapidly expanding momentum of independence movements throughout the British and French empires, fascists believed they could salvage the global dominance of the West. Fascists believed that retreating into limited, territorial nation-states would condemn a people to submission to larger geopolitical forces. Only incorporating foreign lands and peoples into an imperial nation-state would guarantee security, prosperity, and independence. Theirs was a brief and often violent attempt, and today appears all the more anachronistic since decolonization rapidly followed in the wake of World War II. Yet the study of the fascist imperial project provides important insights into fascism as a global force, one that aggressively aimed at imperial maintenance and expansion, while also claiming to be a universal alternative to liberalism and communism.

This study will explore the attempts by Italian and French fascists to theorize and construct imperial spaces that would reflect far-rightist values and goals. Given the narrow period of time within which this project occurred (roughly 1930-1943), the purpose is not to compare two different models, but rather to gain a broader view of what constituted fascist imperialism. For the Italian fascists, building a Mediterranean empire was essential not only for geopolitical goals, but also to accelerate an anthropological revolution by which Italians would become totalitarian citizens. In the case of French rightists, fascist

political parties during the Popular Front Period (1936-1938), notably the Parti Populaire Français, argued that empire would be the salvation of a supposedly weakened and degenerate France. During the Vichy regime, authoritarian conservatives and fascists had a brief window (June 1940-November 1942) to implement a series of colonial reforms. Together, the French and Italian experiences of far-rightist imperialism reveal some of the core components of what can be called a fascist model of imperialism.

By employing the concept of fascist imperialism, we must identify how such a project differed from the liberal version. In no way does this differentiation aim to absolve or apologize for liberal imperialism. In fact, certain continuities existed between liberal and fascist imperialism in both the French and Italian cases.[1] A few examples will suffice: Liberal colonial regimes often maintained rigid hierarchies of race that differed little from that imposed by Fascist Italy. And while Italy was busy with its brutal suppression of Tripolitanian and Cyrenaican resistance in Libya, Republican France was crushing the Rif revolt in Morocco, and shelling Damascus during the Druze uprising of 1925-1927.[2]

Yet while Republican France and Great Britain fought an interwar rear-guard action against anti-colonial movements and demands for independence, Fascist Italy and Vichy France aggressively asserted their imperial rights. In the case of Italy, the regime was even willing to do so against the opprobrium of much of the world during the invasion of

1 Nicola Labanca demonstrates how liberal Italy's colonial efforts included their own fair share of abuses of power and instances of lawless violence. Labanca, "Italian Colonial Internment", in Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (eds.), *Italian Colonialism* (New York, 2008), pp. 27-30.

2 For French methods of violence in Syria, see Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate: Insurgency, Space and State Formation* (New York, 2012).

Ethiopia in 1935-1936. Fascists were also willing to celebrate colonial violence as regenerative, rather than pushing it under the rug as liberal governments were likely to do. However, it would be short-sighted to conclude that fascist imperialism was merely an unmasked liberal imperialism, or liberal imperialism without any ethical or humane considerations. Fascists were certainly willing to apply merciless tools of violence to isolate and destroy internal opposition in the quest for unquestioned sovereignty. But just as the classical Marxist interpretation of fascism as a last-ditch defense of capitalism is reductive, there is more to the story of fascist imperialism than mere unbridled violence in defense of a failed liberal maintenance of colonial power.

Our knowledge of fascist imperialism is still underdeveloped given the attention paid to both fascism and empire. A promising start was made by Hannah Arendt, who identified imperialism as a key precursor to twentieth-century totalitarianism. In particular, she pointed to the outwardly directed nationalism of the "alliance of mob and capital" and the racist nature of an enterprise that undermined the allegedly universal values of Europe. With pan-Germanism and pan-Slavism, imperialism was unleashed within Europe itself, to the irreparable damage of law.[3] Arendt's linking of nineteenth-century imperialism and twentieth-century European violence still inspires detailed studies and theoretical considerations,[4] yet, unsurprisingly for a theory directed at explaining central and eastern

3 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Orlando, 1994), pp. 123-266.

4 Enzo Traverso, *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York, 2003), pp. 47-75; Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, 2005); Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, *Coloniser, Exterminer: sur la guerre et l'état colonial* (Paris, 2005).

European history, has limited application to the French and Italian cases.[5] Arendt argues that imperialists hoped to expand without extending their nation's body-politic, or in the case of the Nazis, as Enzo Traverso demonstrates, to extend the body-politic through racial extermination and resettlement.[6] Yet French and Italian fascists sought precisely to stabilize imperialism through incorporating colonized peoples into a body-politic defined by hierarchy, stability, and European supremacy instead of the liberal values of freedom and equality.

While Arendt and others have brought to light the imperialist influence on fascism, less is known about the fascist influence on empire. Surveys by important historians of fascism, though often stressing its expansionist tendencies, have little to say about what exactly constituted the fascist view of empire, and how imperial subjects would be treated by fascist regimes.[7] Mark Mazower has examined Nazi history in light of empire,[8] and Davide Rodogno has done similar work on Italian occupied territories during World War II. While critiquing the myth of Italians as "humanitarian" fascists as opposed to the ruthless Nazis, Rodogno also recognizes that a gulf separated a Nazi imperialism predicated on extermination and slavery, and Italian plans to create satellite states in

5 Arendt also considered fascist Italy to have been a "nontotalitarian dictatorship" like those in interwar Hungary, Portugal, and nationalist Spain, partly due to its placement of the state above the fascist party movement. Arendt, *Origins*, pp. 257-259, 308-309.

6 Arendt, *Origins*, p. 135; Traverso, *Origins*, pp. 71-75.

7 Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York, 2005); Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison, 1995); Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (New York, 2007).

8 Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York, 2008).

Europe while placing non-European populations under permanent tutelage.[9] French and Italian rightists, though sometimes influenced by Nazis, developed their own visions and practices for empire. Recent studies on Italian colonialism and French rightists in Algeria have begun to paint a more detailed picture, but remain limited in scope. In the case of Italian colonialism, many of these studies have focused on culture, from architecture and tourism to film.[10] This study, while still drawing from these works, shifts the focus back to the political. The central question is how French and Italian fascists could first conceive of a political space existing in the Mediterranean, and then how other actors could be politically integrated into their projets of imperial maintenance and expansion. Studies on fascist appeals to Muslims, particularly to rile up hatred and distrust of liberal colonialism, view such entreaties as largely instrumental ploys,[11] though it is clear that fascists were also strongly interested in laying the groundword for a positive relationship between fascist imperial governance and Muslim populations.

A start towards an understanding of a French and Italian fascist imperialism can be made through two concepts articulated by the controversial German legal theorist Carl Schmitt (1888-1985). While it may appear strange at first glance to look to a German with Nazi--associations for an interpretation of French and Italian imperialism, it is important

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9 Davide Rodogno, *Il Nuovo Ordine Mediterraneo: Le politiche di occupazione dell'Italia fascista in Europa (1940-1943)* (Turin, 2003), pp. 91-100, 476-484.

10 Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema* (Bloomington, 2015); Mia Fuller, *Moderns Abroad: Architecture, cities and Italian imperialism* (London, 2010); Brian L. McLaren, *Architecture and Tourism in Italian Colonial Libya: An Ambivalent Modernism* (Seattle, 2006).

11 Manuela A. Williams, *Mussolini's Propaganda Abroad: Subversion in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 1935-1940* (New York, 2006); Nir Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East, 1933-1940* (New York, 2010).

to remember that Schmitt, as a highly respected conservative intellectual and jurist, was well-placed to articulate the sometimes-confused and contradictory worldview of the European right. The two concepts proposed by Schmitt that are critical for this study are the friend/enemy distinction as the core of the sphere of the political, and the great-space theory of geopolitics.

THE FRIEND-ENEMY DISTINCTION

Famously, in *The Concept of the Political* (1932), Schmitt argued that the political, like religion, economics, or aesthetics, maintains its own autonomous sphere. This sphere is determined by the "friend-enemy distinction"; the ability of a decision-maker to identify the friends and enemies of the political community. For Schmitt, the political was not a space of intellectual debate, or competition between utilitarian or rational systems, but of existential struggle that always presupposed the possibility of war and physical violence.[12] The decision to engage in such a struggle could not be made on the basis of atomized individualism, but only by a sovereign, an actor existing both within and without the political community who would speak in its name. Any members of the political community who wished to escape from the ensuing friend-enemy distinction could be freely removed.[13]

One may wonder what exactly was at the root of the existential nature of the political. Why did politics have to be a zero-sum game, instead of an art of compromise,

12 Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago, 2007), pp. 19-37.
13 Ibid., pp. 45-52.

even if agonistic?[14] As a staunch conservative, Schmitt saw the potential necessity of every political community to defend its "way of life" and its "form of existence".[15] For example, religion is separate from the political sphere, but if a religious way of life is threatened, then the possibility of a political grouping based on the defense of that religious way of life exists. Such a political grouping can only exist if another grouping constitutes a threat-such is the antagonistic essence of the political for Schmitt.[16]

The link between the friend-enemy distinction and fascism should be clear. As an ideology, fascism thrived off the ever-present possibility of violence that would regenerate a political (national) community. To think of the many groups victimized in Nazi concentration camps is enough to understand the power of this existential distinction in the fascist worldview. Yet the focus of this study will lie less on the "enemy" side of the distinction, but rather on the "friend". Given the aggressive and exclusivist nature of fascist movements, on what basis could political friendships be developed? And in particular, how could such friendships work outside of the ethnic national political grouping at the core of fascist states? In short, how could fascists hope to turn imperial subjects into "friends"?

Before directly addressing this question, it is helpful to review how the fascists hoped to deal with a group that shared some similarities with the colonial subject: the proletarian worker. Just as Schmitt's notion of the political sacrificed domestic politics for

14 Chantal Mouffe argues that an "agonistic" politics is possible within liberalism, a possibility that Schmitt does not admit. Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London, 2013), pp. 137-139.

15 Schmitt, *Concept,* p. 27.

16 Ibid., pp. 37-45.

international politics by envisaging an authoritarian political community mobilized in opposition to foreign enemies, fascist states hoped to depoliticize their political communities so as to reduce the possibility of domestic conflicts during wartime.[17] For some groups, particularly that of Jews, such a desire could lead to ostracization, the stripping of legal rights, internment, and even death. But for others, like the worker, whether industrial or agricultural, the fascist strategy was absorption into the community. On the level of domestic politics, the worker then had to be torn away from the enemy groupings of socialism and communism, and turned into fascist friends.

AMBIGUOUS FRIENDS: FROM THE WORKER TO THE COLONIAL SUBJECT

The debates on this issue reveal the ambiguity of the category of the worker in fascist thought and practice. The crux of the matter was the political potential of the worker. Was the worker a possible candidate for a new class of political elites? Or a dangerous receptacle of communist or anarchic ideas? Should workers wield domestic political power in a corporatist system? Or should they be depoliticized through nationalist state institutions? If the friend-enemy distinction was often clear, as it was with Jews and communists, then the fascist view of industrial workers was rather ambiguous.

The closest Italian fascism came to declaring the worker an enemy occurred during the squadrista assaults on socialist and communist organizations in response to a wave of strikes and leftist demonstrations in 1919-1920. For Schmitt, any political state could, "in

17 Serge Sur, "Ami, ennemi: le politique selon Carl Schmitt", in Serge Sur (ed.), *Carl Schmitt: Concepts et usages*, (Paris, 2014), pp. 238-239.

a critical situation, decide upon a domestic enemy."[18] During the years of squadrismo violence, Italian fascists essentially declared leftist organizations to be enemies of the Italian nation. They did so in the name of a state allegedly left powerless to make a decision by the weaknesses of the liberal regime. Yet, just as quickly as the fascists violently suppressed leftist worker associations and unions, they attempted to create their own. According to Emilio Gentile, a key proponent of the March on Rome, the former anarcho-syndicalist Michele Bianchi, understood that the fascists needed to control the state as quickly as possible in order to imbue fascist unions with political power before the hesitant workers revolted.[19]

Once in power, former anarcho-syndicalists like Bianchi aligned more closely with the Italian Nationalist Association than with socialists. The syndicalists promoted Italian industrial development even at the cost of the well-being of the workers in order to free Italy from its subservient role vis-à-vis the "plutocratic" powers of Great Britain and France. This was an uneasy alliance. For nationalists, led by Alfredo Rocco, the consumption of workers had to be pushed down to facilitate capital accumulation. The role of the state was to oversee this limitation of worker consumption while playing a protective role against over-zealous employers.[20] The syndicalists still hoped that the state itself could be constituted by elite syndicalist workers and soldiers, who, with a productivist and

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18 Schmitt, *Concept*, p. 46.

19 Emilio Gentile, *E fu subito regime: Il fascismo e la marcia su Roma* (Bari, 2012), pp. 103-104, 130-135.

20 A. James Gregor, *Mussolini's Intellectuals: Fascist Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, 2005), pp. 44, 50-51.

nationalist ethics, and control over economic decisions, would accomplish the goals of the nationalists without the need for coercive measures.[21]

The 1927 Charter of Labor settled the debate between syndicalists and nationalists by establishing a basic framework that would be expanded upon, but whose principles would remain largely untouched. While Italian industrialists hoped to maintain the status-quo, the syndicalists argued that their fascist unions should co-ordinate national production as public institutions with considerable power. In a compromise largely inspired by Rocco, Mussolini decided upon employing the fascist state as a means of mediating between unions of workers and employers organized in state-run institutions.[22]

Henceforth, the fascist regime consistently restricted wages and banned strikes while instituting various compensatory social programs. Some of these, like the Dopolavoro (Afterwork), an institution designed to organize new forms of leisure for workers, had the express intent of reducing the political demands of workers by providing forms of depoliticized public life. However, the failure of the syndicalists to achieve a prominent position of political power for workers did not end the continued valorization of the "producer" as a favored group in an imaginary world of social cohesion. Left-fascists continued to experiment with ideas of "productivist values" as a means of aligning fascist interests with those of workers.[23] Though largely unsuccessful, the Italian fascist attempt

21 Ibid., pp. 72-73, 78-79.

22 Alessio Gagliardi, *Il corporativismo fascista* (Bari, 2010), pp. 26-69.

23 Giuseppe Parlato, *La Sinistra Fascista: Storia di un progetto mancato* (Bologna, 2000), pp. 177-225.

to neutralize the political opposition of the workers also proposed a positive view of the worker as a potential carrier of fascist values.

From a theoretical perspective, the most fascinating rightist analysis of the role of the worker is that of Ernst Jünger (1895-1998), who explored the issue in his 1932 book, *The Worker* (*Der Arbeiter*). Not only did Jünger's analysis provide an interesting answer to the question of the industrial worker, but also allows us to shift our focus from the worker figure to the colonial subject. Along with Carl Schmitt, Jünger was a prominent intellectual leader of Germany's Conservative Revolutionary movement. Rather than defend purely reactionary positions, Jünger sought to turn the experiences of total war and mass-mobilization during the Great War into the founding moment for a new type of man opposed to the individualist/mass man of bourgeois society. The new man, called the Worker, would reject the liberal heritage of socialism, including a belief in progress and class identity, in favor of a desire to radically transform the planet through a profound assimilation with technology. The Worker was therefore not a class figure, but a type of man who had experience with technology, mobilization, sacrifice, and pain.[24] Though industrial workers and veterans of the Great War were most likely to have adopted this "style of life", the features of the Worker were quickly appearing in every facet of life. The act of reading news-briefings on a bus, of watching a film, of playing a sport; these all constituted a world of total work that undermined the bourgeois order and gave way to the

24 The idea that the Worker figure would freely accept pain and sacrifice, stressed by Jünger, was also a common theme among Italian fascists, who expected corporatist institutions to habituate workers to such hardships in the name of the political goals of the national community. Ernst Jünger, *L'operaio: dominio e forma*, trans. Quirino Principe (Parma, 2010), p. 68.

Worker who desired a totalitarian state based on mobilization and grand projects. The prophetic vision of the Worker therefore expanded the typical fascist concept of a "trenchocracy" of Great War veterans capable of instituting a novel form of politics, to wider segments of society.

Since Jünger's vision is characteristically vague and mystical at times, it is unclear exactly what the new worker state would look like. Even more ambiguous are the consequences for the geopolitical order. Jünger argues that the Worker will initiate a planetary transformation, and forecasts that as the new form of true Worker socialism becomes authoritarian, Worker nationalism will become imperial. As the Worker seeks to employ his use of technology in ever greater projects, imperial spaces are incorporated into the Worker State. While this stage of the process is clear, the place of non-nationals residing in those imperial spaces is not. Are they to be a permanent underclass to the "race" of European workers? Will the all-encompassing world of work eventually incorporate non-Europeans into the totalitarian state? Jünger, probably unsure himself, provides some guesses that forecast the difficulties of fascists in formulating their imperial states. To start with, Jünger recognized that the liberal bourgeois order hypocritically justified the exploitation of colonial peoples through their claims to universal progress, humanitarianism, and civilizing progress. Yet that same discourse undermined the colonial order and threatened a sort of global anarchy. Regarding the claims of colonial peoples, Jünger was of two minds. Echoing Schmitt's friend-enemy distinction, Jünger claimed that the conflict between the liberal bourgeois order and that of totalitarian work should draw in actors from every corner of the globe, suggesting that "we must recognize our true allies

wherever they can be found. They are there where one does not demand conservation, but an assault; we are heading for a general situation in which every conflict, wherever in the world it breaks out, will strengthen *our* position."[25] From this perspective, colonial unrest promised to help undo the liberal order.

Yet other considerations put this potential alliance of Workers and the colonized into question. Colonial revolt was not based on the Worker figure, but on the same liberal-democratic principles propounded by the Europeans. Jünger particularly feared that the principle of self-determination would lead to a Balkanization of certain areas of the world, with "natural", rather than "historic", forces coming to the fore with anarchy in tow.[26] With the re-imposition of new empires based on work, what would happen to the forces of decolonization? According to Jünger, the process would lead to a new round of colonial wars defined by a dramatic difference in technological means.

> One of the most unpleasant prospects is undoubtedly the possibility that small and weak peoples, rooted in their ancient and natural terrain, will undergo violence from the second-rate powers that employ superior means without the responsibility that their use entails. This gives all the more reason to hope that there will emerge powers capable of founding empires whose interiors are guaranteed protection, and that one will be able to speak of a world tribunal of which we see a caricature in the sad farce of the League of Nations.[27]

How exactly the subjects of the new imperial states would shift from aspiring to the liberal-democratic model to accepting a totalitarian worker state is not described. And here lies the aporia in Jünger's argument: if the colonized would side with the Worker against the

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25 Ibid., p. 147.
26 Ibid., pp. 224-225.
27 Ibid., pp. 220-225.

bourgeois order so as to attain the unrealized ideals of the liberal order, then what would be the basis of further co-operation? Jünger believed that the mobilization of the colonized during World War I did not lead to the revelation of the Worker as in Europe, but rather to the heightened desire for the rights of the bourgeois individual within a traditional nation-state. By never describing the mechanism by which the colonized could attain the ranks of the Worker, Jünger deprives them of a role after the overthrow of the liberal order. Afterwards, they can only submit to the initially raw violence of the Worker states and hope for subsequent stability. That Jünger remarks upon the ability of the colonized to borrow from liberalism, but does not reflect on their potential to become Workers points to a gap in his advocacy for a new imperialism. What if they employed the same tools as the European Workers to resist this advance? If the end goal of the Worker state was to re-introduce order and stability into the world, how could this be guaranteed without an articulation of the novel imperial structure? Indeed, as we will see, one of the "second-rate powers" that Jünger was probably referring to, Fascist Italy, did brutally put down "small and weak peoples". Yet when it turned to the organization of its new empire, defined in contrast to those of the "plutocratic" states, it struggled mightily to legitimize itself. If fascism was able to tentatively solve the riddle of the worker in its own eyes, then Jünger's inability to theorize a basis for an imperial order was a harbinger of a more difficult conundrum: how to unleash a virulently nationalist movement onto an imperial project.

THE GREAT-SPACE AS A POLITICAL SOLUTION

While Jünger could only offer vague and prophetic guesses as to what spatial reorganizations would occur under the aegis of the Worker, Carl Schmitt provided a more

detailed account of what was likely to occur. Though Schmitt's earlier writings revolved around the nature of politics, sovereignty, and secularism, he later shifted his sights to international law. During World War II and the early Cold War, Schmitt argued that the universalist values of liberal-democratic powers had undermined state sovereignty while intensifying armed conflict. Schmitt believed that only a pluralistic world-order structured by regional super-powers could restore order and moderation to international law.

Though Schmitt's prognostications have recently raised interest in an increasingly plural world in which state sovereignty seems to be under constant attack, the means by which regional super-powers can be constituted into coherent political spaces remains unclear. Certainly, Schmitt's own experiences in this regard were disappointing. In his 1939 lecture/book *The Grossraum Principle of International Law*, Schmitt argued that Germany was particularly well-situated geographically and historically to play the role of a non-universalist regional power. As Georges-Henri Soutou has demonstrated, Schmitt's vision of a large German political space was largely at odds with the biological racist plans of many Nazi leaders.[28] Though the extreme Nazi policies in the East were contrary to Schmitt's ideals, the Italian conceptions of imperial rule corresponded much more closely to the future world-order articulated in *The Grossraum Principle*. While Italians elaborated their vision independently of Schmitt, the book was translated into Italian in 1941 and influential imperial officials took an interest in it.[29] A quick survey of Schmitt's *The*

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28 Georges-Henri Soutou, "Carl Schmitt et les 'grands espaces' dans le context de l'Allemagne nationale-socialiste", in Serge Sur (ed.), *Carl Schmitt*, pp. 24-31.

29 ASMAE, Sottosegretario per gli Affari Albanese, B. 213, F. vol. "Il Concetto d'Impero nel Diritto Internazionale" di Carl Schmitt, Jacomini to Corrias, 6 February 1942.

Grossraum Principle will therefore clarify some of the problems of Italian imperial thinking before briefly examining a similar statement by an influential Italian hierarch.

In *The Grossraum Principle*, the conception of the political as the friend-enemy distinction is fully transplanted onto an international level, a move that Schmitt would continue in the post-war years in *Nomos of the Earth* and *Theory of the Partisan*. Schmitt had built up to these ideas with previous works; in the wake of League of Nations sanctions against Italy for its invasion of Ethiopia, he argued that the attempt to build a universal liberal-democratic order through the League had weakened sovereign states while criminalizing the formerly legal right of such states to declare war. As a result, war was no longer a bracketed affair between two legitimate entities, but rather a police action between a universal and just power, and a criminal outcast.[30] Even in *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt condemned the false humanitarianism of liberal colonialism since such regimes had particular, and not universal goals and interests, yet appropriated the notion of humanity to deny rights to their enemies.[31]

Despite these criticisms, Schmitt was not advocating a return to the political freedom of the nation-state. What he called "economic-industrial organizational development" had reached a point where spatially limited national structures would no longer be sufficient.[32] The only way to compromise between economic globalization and

30 Carl Schmitt, "The Turn to the Discriminating Concept of War", in Carl Schmitt, *Writings on War*, ed. Timothy Nunan (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 30-33.

31 Schmitt, *Concept*, pp. 54-55.

32 Schmitt, "The Großsraum Order of International Law with a Ban on Intevention for Spatially Foreign Powers: A Contribution to the Concept of Reich in International Law (1939-1941)", in Schmitt, *Writings on War*, pp. 77-79, 111.

politics was to establish “great spaces”. The American Monroe Doctrine served as a historical model for Schmitt, who saw American control over the Western Hemisphere as a more stable and coherent political space than the far-flung and scattered British Empire. While the former implicitly recognized spatial forms, the latter opened up British rule to claims of dangerous universalism.[33] Up to this point, Schmitt’s argument has been clear and penetrating. Yet, the content of his spatial forms is murky, and did not become too much clearer with later additions to the main text. With the critique of international law out of the way, the way forward appears quite problematic. What constitutes his political space? How is it organized into a political structure that can replace his ideal Westphalian system-era state?

That particular and not abstract space is intimately related to politics is quite clear in Schmitt’s perspective. “For us”, he writes, “there are neither spaceless political ideas nor, reciprocally, spaces without ideas or principles of space without ideas. It is an important part of a determinable political idea that a certain nation carries it and that it has a certain opponent in mind, through which this political idea gains the quality of the political”.[34] As we see at the end, Schmitt’s definition of the political rears its head in geopolitics, as any “great space” must contain ideas and principles in opposition to a competitor. Consequently, during World War II, Schmitt asserted that one major role of the German Grossraum would be to oppose the assimilationist spaces of the liberal-democratic West and the revolutionary Bolshevik East. Having identified the political

33 Ibid., pp. 83-95.
34 Ibid., p. 87.

enemies, Schmitt had to find the positive content for the German space. This was to be the protection of the nation, understood as a cultural community. In characteristic terms, Schmitt described the German Reich as having "the holy honor of defending a non-universalistic, volkisch order of life with respect for the nation."[35] A Grossraum that protected "forms of existence" and "ways of life" would then eliminate the existential threat to communities, and thereby eradicate the political within the great-space. Just as the worker could be subsumed within a broader political community, so too would smaller nations and ethnic groups. Such secondary groups within the Grossraum would be protected from the existential threat of competing geopolitical entities; as always with Schmitt, the political would be shifted to the borders.

The problem, never addressed by Schmitt, was the unlikeliness that such a Grossraum could eliminate the smaller nations' desire for sovereignty. During the period of decolonization, Schmitt touched on this problem in his analysis of the partisan figure. A traditional "telluric" partisan, rooted in the protection of local freedoms and ways of life, was acceptable to Schmitt, as such resistance could still fall under legal norms. Yet partisans engaged in a struggle defined globally, and influenced by third parties such as the Soviet Union, inevitably led to the elimination of bracketed war and the introduction of "absolute enmity".[36] As we will see, fascists often saw Arabs and Muslims as servants of universal and revolutionary movements such as pan-Islamism and communism. Despite

35 Ibid., p. 102.
36 Carl Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*, trans. G.L. Ulmen (New York, 2007), pp. 81-95.

understanding the possibility that North Africans could then become an "absolute enemy", fascists also hoped that those same North Africans could become a type of partisan engaged in a struggle against liberalism and communism. A third alternative-conceding soverign status to North African nations-was out of the question. As a result, fascists were forced to envision North Africans as "friends" in a regional grouping defined by a global ideological struggle. Not all fascists agreed with such a strategy, with some remaining suspicious of North African intents. And of course, such a grouping of friends would require the free participation of North Africans who often had radically different goals.

In the desire to downplay Arab nationalism, fascists relied on Orientalists, who confirmed theories that the Muslim and Arab worlds were culturally unified. While supposedly incapable of forming European-style nations or modern empires, Muslims were particularly receptive to global changes since an event in Morocco could elicit strong responses in Indonesia, and vice-versa. Such a view of a politically divided, but culturally unified Islamic World, proferred by Orientalists and specialists in the Middle East and North Africa, bolstered the view that fascist imperialism could be acceptable if it responded to cultural fears of liberalism and communism. European ideas of Islam then played a role in the belief that Arabs and Muslims would be amenable to something akin to Schmitt's Grossraum- particularly in the case of Italy.

Shortly after Schmitt began to publish his ideas on the Grossraum, one of the chief Italian fascist ideologues and hierarchs, Giuseppe Bottai, offered a brief summary of Italy's vision of the post-war "new order". Whereas Schmitt was concerned that the liberal and Soviet claims to universalism would preclude a stable and multipolar world order, Bottai

made the more common argument that Great Britain and France had guaranteed a revisionist war through their monopolization of colonial resources.[37] Perhaps the bluntness of Bottai's perspective can be attributed to his direct political involvement as a fascist hierarch, whereas Schmitt was largely commenting from the sidelines. Yet the two shared a suspicion of abstract universalism, and hoped that their countries would articulate novel forms of local universalisms to justify the creation of large geopolitical spaces.

For Bottai, an Italian empire would be centered not on a universalism of values and norms, but on a "universal" spirit of justice that history had provided to the Italians. The lessons learned from the Roman Empire had allegedly taught Italians how to rule over a diverse array of Mediterranean peoples, with their differing languages, religions, and customs.[38] So long as locals submitted to a universal Italian imperial hierarchy, local particularisms would remain intact. Bottai pointed to Italian policy in Libya, Ethiopia, and Albania as concrete proof of the Italian approach.[39] Unwittingly or not, Bottai had followed Schmitt's recipe for a fascist great-space: the preservation of the existential identity of the colonized from other world powers.

Furthermore, Bottai's conception of universalism privileged Italians, and was not a set of values to be borrowed by others. Indeed, universalism in this guise was synonymous with empire as a historically and geographically legitimated right to rule any who might fall under Italian sway. In this regard, when Bottai and other fascist ideologues wrote about

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37 Giuseppe Bottai, *Contributi dell'Italia fascista al "Nuovo Ordine"* (Rome, 1941), pp. 11-13.
38 Ibid., pp. 12-14.
39 Ibid., pp. 15-19.

universalism, they were somewhat close to what Schmitt had in mind when he foresaw a powerful nation-state acting as the sovereign figure of each Grossraum. Since the technological and economic development of each great space would require some sovereign animating figure, smaller nations would inevitably be placed under the direct control of its regional imperial ruler. For Schmitt, such an arrangement was necessitated by questions of international law and stability, as well as the protection of the sphere of sovereign politics against global economic forces. However, for a veteran corporatist like Bottai, the role of the imperial sovereign in the coming Axis-controlled great-spaces was intimately tied to corporatism. Until the excesses of private capitalism were curtailed by the state and redirected into equitable development schemes, turmoil would continue both in Italy and abroad. Since corporatism had supposedly resolved the domestic tensions within Italian capitalism, it was now a matter of extending the same principles to the Italian empire. Here the connection between the worker and the colonized subject as domestically depoliticized "friends" of the imperial fascist state is apparent. According to Bottai, the fascist state would protect imperial subjects just as it had protected the Italian proletariat.[40] Once imperial agricultural, commercial, and industrial interests were directed by the universal Italian state, the entire Mediterranean region would enter a new era of peace, prosperity, and justice.

40 Ibid., pp. 5-8.

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

It is tempting to read Bottai's rather hopeful vision as a utopian daydream during a flagging war effort, or a desperate bid to provide a rationale for a fascist regime that had grown weary and tired. Yet, Bottai did not write his pamphlet on a whim, but rather succinctly summarized an Italian imperial vision that had been decades in the making. This vision in turn had roots in French thought, and turned into a reinforcing circle by the time French fascists began to put forward their own imperial project. The first chapter will explore the French and Italian right's fascination with empire, particularly in its Mediterranean possibilities. The intellectual similarities and links between the two constituted a shared discourse that was then employed in the interwar years, particularly by French settlers in North Africa, to promote a collaborative Franco-Italian (and sometimes Hispanic) project of "Latin" imperialism heavily inflected by fascist and authoritarian ideas.

The failure of the "Latin" collaborative approach inspired attempts by both French and Italian rightists to engage a Muslim audience. The rest of the study will explore this fascist attempt to appeal to Muslims as political "friends". In doing so, it will distinguish between two modes of communicating fascism. The first can be identified as something of an insurgent model. In this case, fascists spoke to Muslims as allies in a struggle against competing political groups. Since this strategy occurred when and where fascists did not exercise direct power, it offered Muslims more freedom to accept, reject, or appropriate fascist ideas. The second model was based on governance, and saw the attempt to depoliticize Muslims by offering protections for their "modes of existence" and "ways of

life", as well as a certain level of integration into a highly ordered and hierarchical fascist colonial state. Any resistance to these programs or to European rule promised to be, and sometimes was, ruthlessly suppressed.

Chapters Two and Three examine the insurgency model. Chapter Two focuses on the Italian attempts to spread fascist ideas into Tunisia and Egypt, two Mediterranean states whose direct or indirect control by Italy was deemed essential to the establishment of an Italian regional space. In both cases, fascist ideas were introduced partly by sizeable Italian communities, partly by regime propaganda. Such propaganda often did more to attack Great Britain and France than to defend or spread fascist values. More importantly, fascism encountered bourgeoning nationalist sentiments among Tunisians and Egyptians. Though the nationalist nature of fascism aroused some interest in these circles, the overwhelming desire to remain independent from any European power, as predicted by Jünger, did not bode well for Italian imperial expansion.

While Chapter Two explores how Italian fascists tried to disrupt British and French colonies, Chapter Three explores how the French Parti Populaire Français' (PPF) activities in Algeria sought to undermine French republican rule during the leftist Popular Front period. Concerned that Algerians would be drawn to leftist programs which would eventually encourage independence movements, the PPF elaborated a program to draw Muslims into their party. By incessantly critiquing the failures of socialists, communists, and Jews to a Muslim audience, and offering a program of cultural and economic protection that echoed that of fascist Italy, the PPF hoped to save *l'Algérie française*. While their strategy largely failed, several Algerians did play active roles in propagating their vision

while still maintaining a level of independence. These Algerians used rightist discourse to criticize French rule and promote reform programs that would redress ills while maintaining French control over Algeria.

Chapter Four shifts to fascist governance in Italian Libya. With few resources to exploit, the primary purpose of Libya was to serve as a military staging-ground for Mediterranean expansion. With that in mind, the so-called "Fourth-Shore" also served as an experimental site for demographic settler imperialism and fascist rule over Muslims. Administering and controlling Libya's Muslim population required a multi-faceted strategy. For one, the impact of emigrant and exiled Libyans had to be carefully controlled, with political enemies closely surveilled, apoliticals encouraged to return, and loyal Libyans sent abroad, particularly to Mecca, in order to further the Italian propaganda agenda. Secondly, the regime, under the ambitious Governor Italo Balbo, made halting steps towards Libyan integration into fascist institutions. The difficulties in implementing this program highlights the importance of the late-1930s push for Italian racial prestige. Finally, Italy promised to protect and modernize Islam in Libya while firmly detaching it from political applications. In practice, Italian efforts to protect the traditional spoke more to Italian desires to reify an "authentic" Libya untouched by a corrupting and universal modernity. At the same time, the regime's policy-line that Islam and fascism were natural allies sparked a discussion in the fascist press that reflects the difficulties in clearly establishing the friend-enemy distinction.

Chapter Five returns to Algeria, where the Vichy regime, backed by fascist groups like the PPF, implemented its own plans for imperial revitalization. Though short-lived and

severely hampered by resource scarcities due to the war, the Vichy experience in Algeria again reveals the rightist desire to turn Muslims into political friends through the creation of state programs and the promise to protect a traditional way of life. Such efforts fell far short of their goals amid French settler backlash against the regime's alleged privileging of Algerians and the almost total rejection of illiberal and authoritarian practices on the part of Algerian political figures.

Chapter One: A Latin Sea? Rightist Mediterraneans in Theory and Latin Unity in Practice

INTRODUCTION

On 8 February 1937, the budding French Algerian writer Albert Camus gave a speech for the inauguration of a Maison de la Culture in Algiers. The purpose of Camus' address was to break the political right's monopoly on defining the Mediterranean as a political and cultural space. Instead of a fascist Mediterranean as conceived by figures like the French monarchist Charles Maurras and the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, Camus proposed a leftist Mediterranean that would accommodate all the region's differences, bring together East and West, and experiment with new forms of collectivism superior to those practiced in Soviet Russia. For Camus, the rightist Mediterranean was "an abstract, conventional Mediterranean symbolized by Rome and the Romans, a people of imitators, which, though it lacked imagination, nevertheless imagined that its martial genius could make up for the artistic genius and zest for life it did not possess." The leftist Mediterranean, in contrast, was "not a classical and orderly place but a diffuse and turbulent one, like the Arab quarters of many of its cities or the ports of Genoa and Tunisia. The triumphant zest for life, the sense of oppression and boredom, the deserted quarters of Spain at noontime, the siesta-that is the true Mediterranean, and it is closer to the East than to the Latin West."[41] The heady optimism of the young author soon confronted harsh realities, as his political projects failed, Europe fell into war, and French Algeria came

41 Albert Camus, *Algerian Chronicles*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (London, 2013), pp. 187-195. The sense of "oppression and boredom" would take quite a dark turn in *L'Etranger*.

under the far-rightist Vichy administration. Five years after his call to allow the Mediterranean sun and sea to guide the way to a more humanist society, the protagonist of Camus' famous novel, *L'Etranger*, Meursault, would murder an Arab while in an existential stupor exacerbated by that same sun and sea.[42]

Though Camus' anti-fascist Mediterranean failed to materialize, he did understand the threat posed by French and Italian rightists in using the Mediterranean as a category of thought to justify the continuation and expansion of violent imperial projects. Indeed, French and Italian fascist ideas of imperialism in the 1930s were inseparable from contemporary conceptions of the historical, cultural, and social conditions of the Mediterranean basin. As a revolt against abstract universalisms, rightist notions of empire focused on regional and local traditions and ways of life that would best be protected and cultivated by a European power with organic links to the Mediterranean as a whole. As the justification for liberal imperialism came under increasing scrutiny in the age of the League of Nations, burgeoning nationalist movements, and the Soviet Union, French and Italian fascists hoped to articulate a new vision of empire grounded in rightist thought. If such a vision would be based on geographic specificity, the Mediterranean served as a perfect

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42 For Camus' relationship to French colonialism, and charges that he was unable to adequately come to terms with it, see Alice Kaplan, *Looking for The Stranger: Albert Camus and the Life of a Literary Classic* (Chicago, 2015) and Azzedine Haddour, *Colonial myths: History and Narrative* (New York, 2000). For Haddour, Camus employed the Mediterranean notion as a utopia to escape the reality of the dead-end of French Algerian society. Even in the 1950s, with the publication and defense of *L'Homme révolté* (1951), Camus pointed to the Mediterranean as a corrective to totalitarian and nihilist thought, thus continuing to ignore the role of the Mediterranean idea in justifying French colonialism; pp. 27-29, 86-87. Kaplan provides a more charitable view, arguing that the murder on the beach was inspired by common newspaper stories on European-Arab violence, and that Camus' hesitation to take sides in the Algerian War can be chalked up to his humanism, rather than as a defense of colonial exploitation; pp. 42-44, 50-51.

conceptual tool: both France and Italy could claim to be responsible for the development of a unified Mediterranean space, while also stressing their own status as a "Mediterranean people". Finally, the ultimate goal of a re-invigorated imperialism, Africa, would be accessible through a highly developed and unified Mediterranean space. Given the strong presence of French and Italians in North Africa, the legacy of Rome in the region, and its proximity to Africa, it was a particularly privileged place in the fascist understanding of the Mediterranean, and will be the focus of this study.

The precondition for the flurry of intellectual activity regarding the Mediterranean was a particular understanding of the region largely formulated by the French during the nineteenth-century. As Hélène Blais and Florence Deprest have demonstrated, the French transformed the conception of the Mediterranean from a dividing sea to a unifying one as imperialists sought to justify the conquest of Algeria and Saint Simonians dreamed of a productive and cosmopolitan Mediterranean led by French technical ingenuity. Concomitant with these more explicitly political conceptions came early scientific proof, particularly in botany, that Southern Europe and North Africa had much in common. In short, the border of Europe had been pushed south to the Sahara, as the flora, fauna, geography, and history of North Africa began to be inserted into a Eurocentric vision of Mediterranean unity.[43] The culmination of these Mediterranean studies came in 1949 with the sweeping work of the historian Fernand Braudel, who himself taught in Algeria from

43 Hélène Blais & Florence Deprest, "The Mediterranean, a territory between France and Colonial Algeria: imperial constructions", *European Review of History*, Vol. 19, 19 (2012), pp. 33-57.

1923-1932, where he absorbed many ideas regarding the unity of the Mediterranean.[44] In his famous study of the sea, which subjected historical events to the structural limitations and opportunities of geography, Braudel identified the climate as an example of a unifying element in the "living unity of the sea", where one could everywhere find "the same eternal trinity: wheat, olives, and vines, born of the climate and history; in other words an identical agricultural civilization, identical ways of dominating the environment."[45] While Braudel also split the Mediterranean into many different units,[46] the very concept of a Mediterranean-based history was the product of a longstanding European desire to define the sea in a coherent way. If for Braudel, structural history constituted "a direct existential response to the tragic times I was passing through",[47] then a similar structured notion of the Mediterranean would help the right pass through its own crises.

By the turn of the century, the first signs of a literary and artistic recognition of the transnational nature of the "Latin" Mediterranean began to pick up steam. At the same time, with the establishment of the French protectorate over Morocco in 1912, a consensus developed in the French nationalist right to support a colonial project many had previously

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44 For Braudel's intellectual development while in Algeria, see Erato Paris, *La genèse intellectuelle de l'œuvre de Fernand Braudel: La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II (1923-1947)* (Athens, 1999), pp. 29-82.

45 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Vol. I*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Berkeley, 1995), pp. 231-238.

46 For example, Braudel would later claim that the Eastern and Western basins "have been comparatively self-contained worlds"; Braudel, *Memory and the Mediterranean*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York, 2001), p. 15.

47 John Strachan, "The Colonial Cosmology of Fernand Braudel", in Martin Thomas, ed., *The French Colonial Mind, Volume I: Mental Maps of Empire and Colonial Encounters* (Lincoln, 2011), p. 75

held in suspicion for drawing strength away from the German border. For the right, the colonies would provide a kind of training-ground for the next generation of French youth, who would then restore a "true France" at home.[48] With rightist support came an injection of rightist trends into colonial thought. One such strand of rightist thought that was crucial to the genesis of a cultural definition of the Mediterranean originated with the poet Frédéric Mistral, who laid the basis for the regionalism that would be later employed by Charles Maurras' Action Française. As the founder and leader of the Félibrige literary organization, Mistral worked to valorize and protect the language traditions of his native Provence. His was an ominous precedent; the desire to maintain the cultural autonomy of Southern France would necessitate its static fixity and ran into the opposition of most of the Provençaux for whom he supposedly spoke.[49] Despite his own apolitical stance, Mistral hoped Latin Europeans would create an "Empire of the Sun".[50] And while the language of regionalism could be employed by leftists like Camus, it mostly served as a tool for the right. Indeed, the Italian fascist intellectual Alberto Spaini proclaimed that Mistral had made a first step towards a Mediterranean consciousness through his visits to Catalan and Naples, and understood the need for a Mediterranean empire as few Frenchmen did.[51] Paul Valéry, once a young admirer of Mistral, would more directly examine the Mediterranean, in which the

48 Raoul Girardet, *L'idée coloniale en France: 1871-1962* (Paris, 1972), pp. 97-102.

49 Pierre Pasquini, "Mistral: La tradition réinventé du people", in Yves Vargas (ed.), *De la puissance du peuple, IV. Conservateurs et réactionnaires, Le peuple mis à mal* (Pantin, 2010), pp. 165-174.

50 Neil Foxlee, *Albert Camus's 'The New Mediterranean Culture': A Text and its Contents* (Berlin, 2010), pp. 90-91.

51 *Il Mediterraneo*, "L'Impero del Sole", July 1937.

esteemed poet found a Latin sea that would ideally be cosmopolitan enough to foster peace while allowing Europe to learn from the East. At the same time, if the Camus of the 1930s celebrated a Greek, "Dionysian" Mediterranean that rejected any inflexible and closed system, Valéry promoted an orderly region based on a legalistic, "Apollonian" Latin model. To this end, Valéry would sign a manifesto in 1925 in support of the French suppression of the Rif uprising in Morocco.[52]

Others would make Schmitt proud by seeking new friend-enemy distinctions through the notion of a Mediterranean space. The most extravagant case came from the adventuring French aristocrat, the Marquis de Morès, who promoted an alliance between Latins and Muslims in a global struggle against Jews and Great Britain. After failing to create a meat-packing empire in the Dakota Badlands and a railway line in the Gulf of Tonkin, the Marquis turned to politics, acting as a political agent for the anti-Semitic program of Edouard Drumont. De Morès dove into working-class Parisian culture in the hopes of uniting the French proletariat in a patriotic struggle against Jewish finance. Despite these efforts, workers generally rejected his Proudhon-inspired advocacy of worker-run factories and shops, and Catholic conservatives found his radicalism too much to bear. With few political opportunities left, and convinced that British and Jewish collusion to destroy France through the restriction of silver had to be counteracted by an

52 Thierry Galibert, "De la Méditerranée de Valéry au Midi du Camus", in Patricia Signorile (ed.), *Valéry et la Méditerranée* (Aix-en-Provence, 2005), pp. 172-184.

expansion of French imperial power, de Morès dreamed of creating a Franco-Islamic alliance in the Sahara.[53]

Just as he had hoped to draw workers to a patriotic economic nationalism, now the ambitious Marquis had his sights set on a grand international alliance that would free France and the Mediterranean/Sahara region from the grips of the British and their alleged Jewish backers. Before an audience of two thousand who had gathered for a meeting of the Society for the Advancement of the Sciences in Tunis, the Marquis provided a kind of foreshadowing of the later Italian project, declaring that

> The French, the Muslims, the Mediterranean peoples…acclaim the alliance of the French and the Muslims, as well as the union of the peoples living around the Mediterranean, to defend the principles of autonomy and alliance, to deliver the earth and humanity from the financial yoke which the English today, throughout the world, seek to thrust on them. The assembly sends its sympathy and good wishes to the Muslims who are fighting them on the banks of the Nile.[54]

Unsurprisingly, the French military refused to aid de Morès in his bid to secure Muslim allies in southern Algeria and Tunisia, and a Tuareg band killed him and stole the considerable amount of money he was carrying.[55] The story of the Marquis is a fascinating one; his national-socialism, though unsuccessful, in hindsight was an ominous sign.[56] His desire to create unique friend-enemy distinctions even led him to recklessly risk his life in the name of a Franco-Islamic alliance.

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53 D. Jerome Tweton, *The Marquis de Morès: Dakota Capitalist, French Nationalist* (Fargo, 1972), pp. 116-187.

54 Ibid., pp. 193-195.

55 Ibid., pp. 196-212.

56 Michel Winock sees in de Morès a sign of a new right; one that takes on socialist concepts through anti-Semitism while availing itself of the myths associated with charismatic personalities. Winock, *Nationalisme, antisémitisme et fascisme en France* (Paris, 2004), pp. 137-138.

For all of the Marquis' efforts, other French rightists had very different views of the role of France in the Mediterranean and of its relations with Islam. The novelist Louis Bertrand, to whom we will return later, exalted the Latin settler in North Africa for creating a new Mediterranean race. According to this view, the harsh geography of the region, coupled with its need for economic development, could rescue Europe from its supposed crisis of decadence.[57] Bertrand had then combined Maurrassian regionalism, a claim to Latin superiority, and the rightist rhetoric of regeneration to justify the harshest forms of colonial domination.

As Patricia Lorcin has argued, for hard-liners like Bertrand, the new Latin race would exclude Arabs and Berbers, who had allegedly done nothing to build on the legacy of Rome. Furthermore, from this perspective, Islam was a backwards force that constituted a permanent obstacle to progress. Yet, contact with Algerians could "rebarbarize" Europeans by keeping them alert and virile in the presence of the enemies of civilization.[58] A similar view was advocated by the soldier-poet Ernest Psichari, the grand-son of Ernest Renan, who hoped that contact with Muslims in French West Africa would revitalize French Catholicism and provide a conservative alternative to universalist, secular colonial methods.[59] Unlike Bertrand, who had contempt for Arabs, Psichari was fascinated by

57 On this aspect of Bertrand, see Seth Graebner, *History's Place: Nostalgia and the City in French Algerian Literature* (New York, 2007), pp. 30-41.

58 Patricia M.E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, prejudice and race in colonial Algeria* (London, 2005), pp. 204-206.

59 Kim Munholland, "The French Colonial Mind and the Challenge of Islam: The Case of Ernest Psichari", in Martin Thomas (ed.), *The French Colonial Mind, Volume II: Violence, Military Encounters, and Colonialism* (Lincoln, 2011), pp. 202-216.

Islam, but believed France had to become more Catholic precisely in order to contain the threat it posed. In his view, only by becoming more spiritual than Muslims could France maintain its empire in Africa.[60] Though Psichari died in World War I, he would not be the last proponent of colonialism as a means of restoring religious values in Europe; that the Mediterranean was a uniquely privileged place for religious experiences became one of the persistent Mediterranean myths. Such experiences could serve as a means to attenuate perceived ills such as secularization, commodification, and homogenization. Other conservatives were less harsh, and proposed a fruitful exchange between Christianity and Islam that would maintain distance and separation while helping Europe recover values lost to modernity. At the least, they could provide a resting-ground for Europeans tired of the travails of modernity. As one French journalist wrote about entering the Muslim quarter of Constantine, Algeria in 1936:

> Let us march slowly and in silence; as we enter these streets, we also go back in time; in changing our environment, we change our era…. For…the beginnings of civilization were always of a great slowness, painfully climbing in slow motion the ascending slope which leads to its fulfilment. But then, it hurtles down, like a crazed body, towards the abyss of decadence. It is very possible we are close to this final stage, in which the condensation and industrialization of the world's telluric forces will destroy us in a definitive and catastrophic conflict of motors, shellfire, and "automatons". But it is not the years to come that concern us today, it is the past centuries whose relics haunt us in the manner of a dream or wish, forever unrealizable or lost.[61]

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60 Alec G. Hargreaves, *The Colonial Experience in French Fiction: A Study of Pierre Loti, Ernest Psichari and Pierre Mille* (London, 1981), pp. 101-102. Hargreaves questions Psichari's dedication to France, arguing that his literary output struggled to define exactly why he thought France was decadent, and what he thought was worth saving. Psichari's love of the military life in the colonies was then just an excuse to engage in individualist power-fantasies.

61 *L'Afrique du Nord Illustrée*, 4 April 1936.

The myths of North Africa serving as an exceptional extension of Europe became standard fare, though open to varying interpretations and ambiguities. In Pierre Drieu La Rochelle's 1939 semi-autobiographical novel *Gilles*, for instance, the eponymous protagonist briefly visits Algeria, where he muses on the need for a new balance of material and spiritual values. Echoing Psichari, though with more benevolence, Drieu La Rochelle writes how "the Islam around him [Gilles], though damaged by colonization, reminded him of the eternal golden rule, to a large extent recently brought back by Maurras". After leaving the countryside, Gilles dismisses a perhaps too-modern Algiers as "like all the other cities of the world"; one of emptiness [vide]. Yet it is in Algiers that Gilles ends his spiral of self-deprecation and unsatisfying relations with women by finding a simple and vivacious wife of partly Spanish origins. Transplanted to Paris, she has to abort their child and succumbs to cancer as the right's Place de la Concorde demonstrations failed.[62] Here La Rochelle referenced the attempt by French rightist parties to overthrow the Republic, or to at least replace the leftist government, on 6 February 1934, which ended in more of a whimper than a bang, thanks to the resolve of the police forces, and hesitancy and lack of coordination among the rightist groups.[63] In Drieu La Rochelle's pessimistic narrative, the

62 Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, *Gilles*, (Paris, 2012), pp. 502-511, 540-546, 604-607.

63 Interpretations of the seriousness of the riots vary. Robert Soucy has argued that its leaders "had no intention of attempting a coup d'état", while Michel Dobry has reprimanded historians for downplaying the failed riots as proof of French "immunity" to fascism. Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933-1939* (New Haven, 1995), pp. 30-33; Michel Dobry, "February 1934 and the Discovery of French Society's Allergy to the "Fascist Revolution", in Brian Jenkins (ed.), *France in the Era of Fascism: Essays on the French Authoritarian Right* (New York, 2005), pp. 129-150.

simultaneous failure of a daughter of Algeria and the French far-right to save both Gilles and France results in the former's nihilistic adhesion to fascism.

This mélange of French Mediterranean conceptions found an increasing resonance among Italians in the mid to late-1930s. In the case of the French, rightists were limited by the ostensibly universal values of the Republic; though they certainly had occasions to enforce their notions of Western order in Morocco and Mandate Syria. But once the fascists took power in Rome, the new regime could systematically and unapologetically employ the myths related to the Mediterranean. The expansionist aims of Italy were clear from the start, though the necessity of consolidating power at home meant that a concerted effort at thinking through empire and Italy's role in the Mediterranean had to wait until the 1930s. Once Italy embarked upon expansionism with its invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935, the importance of the Mediterranean myth became central to what would become the final stage of Italian fascism, marked by imperialism, totalitarian ambitions, and a desire for war. In an effort to inculcate a "Mediterranean consciousness" into Italians during this period, the regime employed cultural reviews, prestigious academics, films, school textbooks, radio broadcasts, and newspaper articles to advance the idea that the Mediterranean was a geographically and historically unified space destined to be brought to political form by Italy.[64] The primary Italian vehicle for developing this imperial Mediterranean consciousness was the Centro di Studi Mediterranei, founded by Giuseppe Bucciante, a journalist who had been an early fascist, even participating in the March on

64 Laura Pisano, "La Méditerranée comme mythe dans la propagande du fascisme italien", *Peuples Méditerranéens*, 56/57 (1990), pp. 241-242.

Rome in October 1922. The Center included many of Italy's most prominent regime hierarchs and cultural figures,[65] who often contributed articles to the Center's glossy monthly, *Il Mediterraneo*. A description of the Center reveals the vision of those who ascribed to a Mediterranean-based empire:

> The Center proposes to inculcate in the spirit of Italians the *sense of Mediterraneità*, that is to say, the awareness of a *Mediterranean consciousness* that fully and energetically corresponds to the historical, civil, and political function that Italy is called on to carry out in the Mediterranean; to collect in Rome…studies and international reports undertaken among the Mediterranean countries in the name of that affinity that the French call "le fait méditerranéen" and remains as the basis of the spirit, the morals, the thought, the aesthetics, and the customs of the Mediterranean peoples, bringing them together and distinguishing them from Nordic peoples, Asians, and Anglo-Saxons; to make known the essential Italian contribution offered in every century to Mediterranean civilization, tributary of Rome and Christianity that has rendered it universal, of the Renaissance and our Maritime Republics that gave it light, laws, and power, of Fascist Italy that in the Mediterranean is still today, among so much darkness, the lighthouse of the new civilization.[66]

Though the Italian conception emphasized their nation's leading role in the region, France was recognized as having already begun work on the conceptual unification of the Mediterranean. Indeed, the Center for Mediterranean Studies looked approvingly on French efforts to think through and define a Mediterranean space. These included the Congress on Humanism held in November 1934 by the Académie Méditerranéenne, and the Mediterranean University Center established in 1933 in Nice and for which Valéry served as the first administrator.[67] The French and Italian discourses could be remarkably

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65 Among the latter were the writers Alberto Spaini and Umberto Notari, the journalist Ugo D'Andrea, the futurists F.T. Marinetti and Tato (Guglielmo Sansoni), the architect Angiolo Mazzoni, and Giuseppe Bottai, the most respected cultural figure among the regime's hierarchs.

66 ACS, Minculpop Gabinetto, B. 48, F. Centro Studi Mediterranei

67 Signorile, "Avant-propos", in *Valéry et la Méditerranée*, p. 6.

similar. For instance, the Académie Méditerrannéenne's congress highlighted the spiritual nature of Mediterranean peoples, their tendency to establish strong states that did not limit individualism, and their sense of limitation compared to the unbridled materialism of the Anglo-Saxons and Americans. Speakers like the writer and socialite Ferdinand Bac suggested that while France and Italy were largely responsible for a unified Mediterranean, the characteristics of the region had been adopted by others throughout the world, thus creating a new form of universalism that could compete with liberalism and communism. Contrary to Italian descriptions though, some participants of the Congress hoped to push back on a rightist conception that excluded the East and rejected cosmopolitanism in favor of Latinity, including the Academy's secretary François Jean-Desthieux. Even so, most speakers broadly fell in line with a view of the Mediterranean that privileged the legacy of Greece and Rome over the vaguely defined "East".[68] Valéry too, spoke of the Latin nature of the Mediterranean, in need of defense from Nordic Europeans.[69]

Yet despite connections to the French, the Italian Mediterranean myth was inextricably linked with the late-fascist cult of empire and romanità. As Emilio Gentile has argued, Mussolini hoped to re-invigorate a flagging fascist movement by turning the fascist party into a totalitarian institution, and by hardening Italians through the crucible of war and imperial conquest. The frequent references to the Roman Empire and Mare Nostrum, as well as the attempted injection of romanità into italianità that constituted so much of late

68 Foxlee, *Albert Camus's 'The New Mediterranean Culture'*, pp. 102-104.

69 *Il Mediterraneo*, "Il Congresso dell'Umanesimo Mediterraneo a Monaco Principato", "L'Università Mediterranea di Nizza ed il suo centro di cultura", January 1936.

1930s fascist rhetoric and discourse did not aim at a reconstruction of the Roman Empire, but rather to mobilize Italians in the fascist project of creating "new-men" through totalitarian organizations and war.[70] The burgeoning interest in the Mediterranean during the 1930s speaks to the realization of many Italian administrators, artists, and intellectuals that a groundwork had to be quickly laid for the oncoming bid for empire. If, as Sloterdijk has pointed out, the Ancient Romans represented the universal struggle to postpone death in the Colosseum, Italian fascists understood that the Mediterranean was destined to be the site of the success or failure of their voluntarist, existential struggle for empire.[71]

To see the Mare Nostrum myth as an empty excuse for expansionism is to miss the potential weight it carried. The mythic re-founding of the Roman Empire was not to be a return, but a profoundly modern experience intimately tied to the goals of the regime. Claudio Fogu's work on the fascist conceptions of history is instructive here. Fogu argues that during the 1920s, Italian fascists created an "historic" as opposed to "historical" culture, in which the past served the needs of the present. Yet by the 1930s, Fogu concludes, the "fascist mind…finds itself oscillating between present belonging to the past and history belonging to the future".[72] This helps explain the apparent confusion between the mania over celebrating the history of Ancient Rome and its projection into a future Mediterranean empire.

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70 Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra* (Rome, 2007), pp. 197-227.

71 Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres, Volume 2: Globes, Macrospherology*, trans. Wieland Hoban (South Pasadena, 2014), pp. 307-313.

72 Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy* (Toronto, 2003), pp. 196-197.

Given the compensatory nature of Italian fascist discourse-the obsession over redeeming something historically lost, whether it be territory, dignity, or national sovereignty- the linking of the Roman past with the imminent attempt to create a Mediterranean empire served as a discourse of redemption that exceeded the nation-state. Whereas nationalist irredentists focused on conquering lands with sizeable Italian populations like the Trento, Trieste, Istria, Dalmatia, and Tunisia, historical irredentism vastly expanded the scope of Italian ambitions.[73] Now any territory linked to the Roman past or to the efforts of Italian immigrant communities had to in some sense be attached to a new Roman empire if Italy was to honor and rediscover its own past.[74] Roger Griffin, quoting Walter Benjamin, remarks that "by anchoring a new future in the mythic remembrance of things past, Fascists put themselves in the position to 'blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history' as much as any Bolshevik revolutionary."[75] Yet, if Benjamin hoped for a revolutionary break in time that would redeem the victims of the past,[76] the fascists would try to redeem the one-time Italian victors of history whose fruits had been betrayed by those foreigners that oppressed Italy. The defeat to Ethiopians at Adowa in 1896, the mass emigration of southern Italians, the reputation of Italians as

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73 Although, even with irredentists, as Annamaria Vinci has shown, the myth of violence along the borders of the nation meant that such borders could never be recognized as precise. The possibility for conflict and an altered border could not be discarded. Vinci, *Sentinelle della patria: Il fascismo al confine orientale, 1918-1941* (Bari, 2011), pp. v-vii.

74 Giovanna Tomasello, *L'Africa tra mito e realtà: Storia della letteratura coloniale italiana* (Palermo, 2004), pp. 76-78.

75 Griffin, *Modernism and* Fascism, p. 223.

76 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, Hannah Arendt (ed.) (New York, 2007), pp. 253-264.

"macaroni-eaters and organ-grinders"[77]- all these humiliations of the past would be remedied by the reconstruction of an empire.

Thus, a collection of ideas about the Mediterranean had by the 1930s turned into a constellation of views and desires that could be arranged and re-arranged by Italian and French fascists. These ideas, largely inspired and articulated by intellectuals, ranging from authors and poets like Louis Bertrand, F.T. Marinetti, Frédéric Mistral, Valéry, to archaeologists, ethnographers, and architects, played into rightist visions for vast spatial re-organizations. The rediscovery of a Mediterranean defined by strong religious beliefs would prove an antidote to modern secularization and a bulwark against atheistic Bolshevism. A Mediterranean defined by the state's role in organizing society would justify the right's dream of a return to order, hierarchy, and discipline. Finally, the identification of authentic Mediterranean songs, architectural styles, clothes, and other cultural practices would stem the tide of soulless materialism. Despite the many contradictions that inevitably came from such a wide range of perspectives, the nebulous constellation constituting the Mediterranean myth provided the rightist political projects of the 1930s an ideological space to navigate.

Of course, these vague calls for a Mediterranean consciousness capable of remedying the ills of modernity did not translate easily into politics. For one thing, the idea of a unified Mediterranean space did not have to be the unique preserve of the right. Camus

77 This final characterization comes from Italo Balbo recounting his mass trans-Atlantic flight to New York and Chicago in 1933. Balbo, *My Air Armada*, trans. Gerald Griffin (London, 1934), p. 103.

was working in a tradition of cosmopolitanism that went back to the theories of Saint-Simonians a hundred years earlier. And though this cosmopolitanism had always been compromised by involvement with the French colonial project, it hesitated in front of the rigid civilizational lines presented by the right. Yet in the context of the interwar years, any notion of organizing the space of the Mediterranean could only find realistic expression in the visions of nationalists arguing for new forms of imperialism, particularly in 1930s Italy. How far would nationalist and fascist movements go in adopting these Mediterranean concepts to justify the maintenance and expansion of empire? Would the creation of a Mediterranean sphere to compete with Northern Europe, America, Russia, and East Asia simply place colonized people at the mercy of French and Italian hegemony masquerading under a rightist universalism instead of the liberal universalism of the "civilizing mission"? Or would the calls to discover longstanding bonds between Mediterranean peoples soften the exclusivist priorities of French and Italian rightists? Would the creation of this Mediterranean space be a joint French-Italian project, or would they compete for leadership? This chapter will provide more context to these questions by examining the gestation of rightist intellectual thought related to empire in Italy. A series of influential thinkers established interpretive keys that would later be employed by political actors in the 1930s. Finally, it will examine the failed attempt by French and Italian rightists to find common ground by using the Mediterranean as a unifying device.

THE MEDITERRANEAN IN ITALIAN RIGHTIST THOUGHT

After the Italian failure to attain more than the small East African colonies of Eritrea and Italian Somalia during the "Scramble for Africa" in the late nineteenth-century, it

appeared that Italy would play an insignificant role as a colonial power.[78] Yet with the turn of the century, a new push for expansionism began, this time inspired less by liberalism, and more by organic notions of imperial nationalism.[79] The old hopes for expanding in Ethiopia and the Ottoman provinces of Tripoli and Cyrenaica were now re-elaborated by a new generation of thinkers.

The first highly developed ideological justification for Italian expansionism came from Enrico Corradini (1865-1931), a novelist and journalist who eventually laid the intellectual groundwork for the Italian Nationalist movement. Since the Nationalists would later form the critical rightist faction of fascism, Corradini's views proved to be essential to the Italian imperial project. A fervent opponent of positivism, liberalism, and socialism, Corradini saw expansionism as the key to the elevation of Italy as a great power. From 1903 to 1906, Corradini's Florence-based paper, *Il Regno* espoused an elitist and colonial vision of Italy with the help of such influential thinkers as Giovanni Papini, Vilfredo Pareto, and Giuseppe Prezzolini.[80]

Led by Corradini, the writers for *Il Regno* elaborated a conception of nations as organisms that served as the primary units of action in the world. Elites that incarnated the values and aspirations of the nation would channel its forces. The "exuberant" energy of Italy was already being exported abroad in various forms: through the spread of the Italian

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78 Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* (Bologna, 2002), p. 99.

79 Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the 20th Century* (Madison, 2009), pp. 94-104.

80 Although Papini and Prezzolini often tried to distance their nationalism from Corradini's, which they viewed as crude, exterior, and rhetorical. Walter A. Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence: From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 48, 89, 126.

language, art, manufactured products, and workers. Yet such exported energy risked benefiting foreign nations. With millions of poor Italians emigrating to the United States and the Americas, and substantial communities in Tunisia and Egypt, Corradini pleaded for Italian colonies that could absorb excess labor.[81] This desire to control the migrant problem and prevent Italians abroad from assimilating would later become a key issue for the fascists, who would attempt to unify Italian communities abroad and employ them to serve state interests while justifying colonial programs in Ethiopia and Libya as a means of allowing Italians to emigrate while never truly leaving Italy.[82] For all the influence exerted by Corradini's notion of cultural imperialism, his declaration that Italy was a proletarian nation struck an even greater chord with many Italians frustrated with the domestic politics of liberal Italy as well its apparent inability to exercise its influence abroad.

While justifying Italy's invasion and occupation of Libya in 1911, Corradini described Italy as a proletarian nation. According to this view, Italy was a vibrant nation, whose external energies would be exploited by the "plutocratic" colonial powers. Whereas Italian labor would provide the blood and sweat in modernizing projects around the world, most benefits would go to the decadent suppliers of capital. From this perspective, a "young" and "healthy" Italy represented life, while the capitalist powers served the

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81 Tomasello, *L'Africa tra mito e realtà*, pp. 45-50.

82 For the fascist view of the migrant issue, and their means of controlling emigrant communities, see Francesca Cavarocchi, *Avanguardie dello spirito: Il fascismo e la propaganda culturale all'estero* (Rome, 2010), pp. 25-89; Claudia Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism: Italian Fascists and Britain's Italians in the 1930s* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 7-28.

deadening positivist agenda that Corradini so despised. Only by loosening France and Great Britain's control of the world could Italy fulfill its destiny. Following the Versailles peace discussions, when irredentist Italians felt cheated by Great Britain and France, these views took on even greater significance among nationalists. Furthermore, by transposing class struggle onto the national level, Corradini hoped to link his elitist nationalism to disaffected socialists. The 1921 split between Socialists and Communists at the Congress of Livorno was only the most recent symptom of an Italian left in a constant crisis between reformism, party-led "maximalism", and anarcho-syndicalism.[83] The latter, in particular, had proven susceptible to conceiving the nation as the most suitable unit of class struggle. A trickle of syndicalist intellectuals who supported the invasion of Libya in 1911 turned into a strong current of interventionists in 1914-1915. Participation in the Great War would supposedly defeat German absolutism, weaken the Italian bourgeoisie, and create a social climate favorable to revolution. The theoretical price to pay was to subsume class conflict into national competition.[84] With the proletarian-nation becoming normalized in Italian nationalist circles, the basis of an awkward union of nationalists and syndicalists within the fascist movement had been put in place.

Corradini's belief in colonial spaces as a repository for Italy's excess and proletarian energies remained a core component of fascist expansionist thought right up to the end of the regime. But there were other influential thinkers who sometimes added depth

[83] Giuliani Procacci, *History of the Italian People*, trans. Anthony Paul (New York, 1978), p. 414.
[84] Zeev Sternhell, Mario Sznajder, and Maia Ashéri, *Naissance de l'idéologie fasciste* (Paris, 1989), pp. 292-318.

to his views and sometimes challenged his assumptions. While famous literary figures like F.T. Marinetti and Gabriele D'Annunzio offered models of the kind of elite, charismatic hero sought after by nationalists like Corradini, they also situated these heroes in Mediterranean settings that were more than just empty spaces waiting to be brought into history by Italians. According to Corradini, the Italians in Libya would replace Arabs and Turks that had no historical right to the land through their supposed lack of civilizational energy.[85] While other Italians were still rabidly Eurocentric, they were not so quick to discount the weight of Mediterranean history and traditions, particularly in their potential effectiveness as barriers against the perceived ills of modernity.

It certainly should have been no surprise to many Italians that the decadent poet D'Annunzio (1863-1938) provided his own justification for the Italian occupation of Libya with his *Le Canzone delle gesta d'Oltremare*. Like Corradini, D'Annunzio saw no place for Libyans in the new Italian colony. Yet whereas Corradini envisioned Libya largely as an abstract container for Italian energies, D'Annunzio saw the new colony as one which would help reshape the Italian people through its own Latin history. As Giovanna Tomasello has argued, D'Annunzio saw Libya "not as something added to an already closed ethnic-geographic entity, but rather as a recuperation of something that long ago was subtracted from that entity, resulting in a territorial mutilation and the obliteration of a unitary race [stirpe] conscience."[86] Expansion into the Mediterranean therefore was an

85 Tomasello, *L'Africa tra mito e realtà*, pp. 53-56.
86 Ibid., pp. 75-80.

opportunity for Italians to rediscover their historic destiny and hopefully discover their heroic nature that would free Italy from international weakness and political malaise.

D'Annunzio differed in other ways from more close-minded nationalists like Corradini. As a dutiful romantic poet, he especially feared the implications of the West's fascination with technocratic rationalism. After taking over the Adriatic city of Fiume (Rijeka) in September 1919 with a small band of radical nationalist and anarchist youth, D'Annunzio engaged in unique forms of ideological syncretism that projected a kinder vision of Islam and Arabs than he had espoused during the Libyan War. From the tenuous base of his newfound Carnaro Republic, D'Annunzio hoped to find allies in the "oppressed" peoples of the world, particularly the victims of British and French colonialism. Islam now appeared as a force that not only countered Italy's biggest European rivals, but also as a deterrent to the spread of Western technocratic imperialism. It is possible that D'Annunzio was in contact with an Egyptian nationalist, Dr. ʿAbd al-Hamid Saʿid, who was in Rome trying to organize a group that would assassinate British officials. The British believed D'Annunzio had even convinced Saʿid, a future deputy for the nationalist Watani party in Egypt, to buy a submarine.[87] While Tomasello argues that fascists would write these Fiume-era appeals out of D'Annunzio's history,[88] we will see later on how fascists employed similar lines of argument to justify an Islamic alliance to Muslims around the Mediterranean and to themselves. The Fiume era also displayed how

87 Malak Badrawi, *Political Violence in Egypt, 1910-1924: Secret Societies, Plots and Assassinations* (Richmond, 2000), pp. 185, 195 (f.).
88 Tomasello, *L'Africa tra mito e realtà*, pp. 80-82.

D'Annunzio's historical appropriations could highlight the importance of non-Italian actors. During Fiume's piracy campaign against Italian merchant ships, D'Annunzio likened his brigands to the Croatian Uskoks who had raided Venetian and Ottoman galleys in the 17th century.[89] Though such appeals to non-Italian historical legitimacy did little to offset the Carnaro Republic's attempt to marginalize the Croatian minority population within the city, its poet-leader proved to be capable of employing surprising sources as a basis for his short-lived state.

Opposed to D'Annunzio's historical vision of the Mediterranean was another influential Italian nationalist writer and intellectual; the futurist leader F.T. Marinetti (1876-1944). Born in Alexandria, Egypt, Marinetti continually returned to Africa in his writings. In both history and geography, Marinetti tended to flatten Africa into a mystical and primitive land in which there were no great differences between Libya, Egypt, and Ethiopia. At first, Marinetti deployed a mythical Africa as the site of his debut novel, *Mafarka the Futurist* (1909). The titular protagonist plays the role of a heroic leader who transforms a primitive and matriarchal society into one of patriarchy and futurist technology through the creation of a mechanical, winged son. The novel's lesson is clear: the primitive nature of Africa was not a limiting factor, but precisely a state far more conducive to radical transformation than a humanitarian and egalitarian European

89 Claudia Salaris, *Alla festa della rivoluzione: Artisti e libertari con D'Annunzio a Fiume* (Bologna, 2002), pp. 133-151.

civilization. By the late 1930s however, Marinetti had reduced the primitive to the backdrop upon which the heroic conquests of a futurist Italy would take place.[90]

For modernists like Marinetti, the Mediterranean and its African hinterland presented theoretical difficulties. Studies by Mia Fuller and Claudio Fogu have demonstrated how some rationalists and futurists sought in the 1930s to attach their movements to a conception of *mediterraneità* in order to assert the independence of Italian art and architecture from Northern European trends. Such a move also offered opportunities to frame new forms of modernity within the fascist regime's Mediterranean program. Of course, working within the regime meant a definition of *mediterraneità* that favored Italian influences. As such, Fuller has shown how rationalist architects like Carlo Enrico Rava believed that the simple, white Libyan houses that served as models for functionalist and modern domiciles derived from Roman designs. Whatever was gained in exploring modern possibilities in the colonies always had to be recuperated within a controlled discourse of Italian or Roman-ness. Other rationalists rejected historical styles in favor what they considered a "timeless" response to the Mediterranean climate. At its most benign, Italian modernists like Rava equated the primitive with modern simplicity, or borrowed from local styles in an eclectic manner like Italian Libya's foremost architect, Florestano di Fausto.[91] Indeed, writers praised Governor Balbo's Tripoli as a modern synthesis of historical periods and ethnic traditions. At other times, modernity came without considerations for local particularities, as in Asmara, which Curzio Malaparte likened to a modern mid-

90 Tomasello, *L'Africa tra mito e realtà*, pp. 88-120.
91 Mia Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, pp. 115-134.

Western American city in an East Africa that supposedly belonged more to the "European Mediterranean" than to Africa.[92]

Within the futurist movement, Fogu has identified two Mediterraneanist strands: one stressing the emporium as a place of exchange and the other stressing the imperium as Italy's claim to rule the region. According to Fogu, Marinetti's experiences with popular culture in Naples opened up novel avenues for futurism. With a newfound appreciation for southern Italy, Marinetti and southern Italian futurists hoped to combine experiments in modern advertising, local culture, and the state's economic development of the south and colonies into a new field for futurist art. Fogu argues that the futurist architecture and art of the Exhibition of African Colonies held in Naples in 1940 exemplified the emporium nature of futurism through its rejection of the stern and domineering style of classically-inspired imperial styles.[93]

Yet the futurist advocacy of imperium should not be minimized. Marinetti volunteered for both the Libyan and Ethiopian Wars and used both experiences as opportunities to extol war as "the sole hygiene of the world". Whereas in *Mafarka the Futurist*, Marinetti posited the primitive nature of Africa as the condition for futurist modernity, in the Ethiopian War, a static and immobile Africa had to be conquered by virile and dynamic Italians.[94] Indeed, in this climate of imperial expansionism of the late 1930s, Marinetti hoped to revitalize his movement through an infusion of African experiences. In

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92 Curzio Malaparte, *Viaggio in Etiopia e altri scritti africani* (Florence, 2006), pp. 51-58.
93 Claudio Fogu, "Futurist *mediterraneità* between *Emporium* and *Imperium*", *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 15, 1 (2008), pp. 25-40.
94 Tomasello, *L'Africa tra mito e realtà*, pp. 116-120.

a 1937 interview with *L'Azione Coloniale*, Marinetti explained the purpose of his new initiative to send writers to Africa. Italian authors who had become complacent could start a new genre of colonial literature which Marinetti hoped would spurn typical colonial tropes and bland propaganda in favor of a realistic and imaginative style.[95] By 1939, Marinetti was prepared to offer some specific advice on how to conceptualize Africa.

In an article for *Africa Italiana*, Marinetti bemoaned the fact that European arts in Africa had become "monotone", "nostalgic", and "static", while its architecture was a "plagiarism" of local styles. In a series of eighteen points, Marinetti proposed potential ways to remedy the problem. Beyond using African sights and sounds as new inspirations, the connecting thread between the various suggestions was the search for a re-vitalized European modernity that would understand itself in relation to a doomed primitive Africa. Aerial technology would allow artists to "speedily sum-up zones in flight with aeropoetry aeropainting aeromusic that have no European inspirations". On the ground, one could "Discover the unexpected beauties of mechanized Africa and of nascent urbanism (examples fluvial navigation irrigation cultivation of cotton revolutionary nationalist futurist architectures of the low terraces of Egyptian villages)". The futurist love of speed could now be juxtaposed with immobile Africa by "Giving the sense of desert solitude in bitter and persistent conflict with speedy streets (examples highways and paths that cross the Sahara and skirt prehistoric villages)." Here the acceleration of historical time could be measured against a land without time. As for the Africans themselves, they could be

95 *L'Azione Coloniale,* Alberto Simeoni, "Africa: appello agli scrittori italiani: Nostra intervista con l'Accademico Marinetti", 4 November 1937.

"colonized by art" while Italians would "reveal the new psychic mysteries caused by European civilization in the static and traditional souls of the African populations exploring and identifying their subconscious anxieties."[96] In the end, Marinetti's Africa was one of unbridled futurist modernity entirely under the control of Italians. It is hard to say how many Italians viewed Mediterranean and African expansion in futurist terms, but it undoubtedly served the regime's interests. Its application outside of artistic circles can be seen in *Etiopia Latina*, a monthly illustrated that often employed futurist-inspired fonts and page layouts to describe economic and military developments, with some headlines slanted and others in a box around the text. Such displays of pure form may seem absurd given the scant resources Italy could invest in Africa, but could nonetheless perpetuate the myth that Italy had the advantage of a "virile modernity."

Marinetti's view was not limited to artistic circles. Engineers, architects, and modern plans displayed a similar enthusiasm for an imperial ultra-modernity. The case of the engineer Gaetano Ciocca, who jumped at the chance to volunteer for the Ethiopian campaign, is instructive. Ciocca's biographer argues that the ambitious engineer viewed Africa as a "land of opportunity whose essential otherness rendered inapplicable traditional European approaches to technics, organization, building, and transportation." As such, Ciocca proposed a "state technics" that, in his own words, would "constitute a laboratory for corporativist experiments".[97] For engineers and architects like Ciocca, or Le Corbusier

96 *Africa Italiana*, F.T. Marinetti, "Verso una grandezza di poesia e arti africane", June 1939.
97 Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Building Fascism, Communism, Liberal Democracy: Gaetano Ciocca-Architect, Inventor, Farmer, Writer, Engineer* (Stanford, 2004), pp. 103-104.

in Algeria, authoritarian colonial governments promised the ability to put Marinetti's ultra-modernity into concrete form.[98]

A very different conception of the Mediterranean and empire came from the esoteric traditionalist Julius Evola (1894-1974). After experimenting with Dadaism, Evola began to combine a reactionary reading of Nietzsche with a fascination for ancient cultures and myths from around the world. Despite entering the world of esotericism and traditionalism, Evola hoped to influence fascism from the outside. From 1926-1927, Evola wrote a series of articles for Bottai's influential journal, *Critica Fascista*. In 1928, Evola expanded on these articles in a book, *Imperial Paganism*. The purpose of the book was to provide a fascist philosophy that would preclude reconciliation with the Catholic Church, which, to Evola's chagrin, would be accomplished shortly after in 1929 with the Lateran Accords. As a faithful follower of Nietzsche, Evola felt that Christianity was the ultimate poison behind all the forces destroying traditionalism: socialism, humanitarianism, abstract science, belief in progress, equality, and democracy. The beginning of the decline was the split between sacred and secular power which had corrupted the Roman Empire from within. If fascism was to cede the sacred to the Church, its mission would inevitably fail.

In order to solidify itself against Christianity, fascists had to borrow from the pagan Mediterranean tradition. According to Evola, "anti-Christianity is the classical, pagan

98 For Le Corbusier's connections with empire and with Italian fascism, see Zeynep Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers under French Rule* (Berkeley, 1997); Rémi Baudouï, "Le planisme et le régime italien" in Marida Talamona (ed.), *L'Italie de Le Corbusier* (Paris, 2010), pp. 161-173.

Mediterranean tradition-our tradition". Pagan values could therefore be found throughout the Mediterranean basin, constituting a "epic and magical tradition of an affirmative, active civilization, strong in wisdom [sapienza] and science, one which marked the elites of the Egyptian-Chaldean, Paleo-Grecian, and Etruscan civilizations, and of other more mysterious ones whose echoes resound in Syria, Mycenae, and in the Balearics."[99] Fortified by such examples, fascism could supplant Christianity as a spiritual force. But the nation-state unit and idea was insufficient for such a task; fascism would have to project itself as empire.

Like Carl Schmitt, Evola was horrified at the prospect of a rationalist economic system destroying an existential political field. Evola believed that

> the true cause of the decadence of the political idea in the modern West resides precisely in the fact that the spiritual values which once penetrated the social order are lessening, without anything to replace them. The problem has lowered itself to the level of economic, industrial, military, administrative, or at most, sentimental factors, without realizing that all this is only material…just as incapable of producing a solid and rational social order resting on itself as the simple encounter of mechanical forces is of creating a living being.[100]

But whereas Schmitt focused on the legal and political implications of abstract universalization, Evola concentrated on protecting the liberty of the individual. As the levelling processes of democratic and economic modernity continued, the space for individual liberty were reduced further and further. Evola's solution was a hierarchy in

99 Julius Evola, *Imperialismo pagano: Il fascismo dinnanzi al pericolo euro-cristiano* (Rome, 2004), p. 64.
100 Ibid., p. 67.

which a select few would maintain unlimited liberty at the expense of the many. The political form of this relationship would, unsurprisingly, be that of empire.

Evola's empire differed from the conceptions of Corradini, D'Annunzio, and Marinetti by rejecting "bombastic nationalism and D'Annunzianism" that would turn "warriors" into "soldiers".[101] The basis of the empire would have to be based on spiritual values and not on national egoism. Evola claimed that

> It is absolutely an error for the empire to build itself on the basis of economic, militaristic, industrial factors and even on 'ideals'. The imperium, as in the Iranian and Roman conception, is something transcendent, and he who realizes it has the power to transcend the small lives of small men, with their appetites, their petty national prides, with their "values", "non-values", and Gods.[102]

Fascism ideally would borrow from the "Orient" whenever it found Oriental values to enhance its own power, while aspects of the Italian national tradition that restricted that power would be discarded.[103] But what could bind this fascist imperium together, since "the force of arms, economic necessity, material interests, or industrial supremacy" were insufficient? The answer was a "higher spiritual and concrete bond", similar to "mana, that today is resuscitated in all the moments of collective enthusiasm, in all the so-called crowd states of which the modern sociological schools are revealing the enormous importance for the psychology of masses and consequently for various social and historic upheavals."[104]

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101 Ibid., p. 60.

102 Ibid., p. 62.

103 Ibid., p. 78. For an example of what could be borrowed from the "East", one could cite Evola's treatment of Islam. For Evola, the dual-nature of jihad, as both internal and external practice, constituted a powerful example of a healthy "tradition" worthy of respect. Julius Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World* (Rochester, 1995), pp. 118-119.

104 Ibid., p. 104

Such psychic bonds would be forged by elites using Sorelian myths to inspire action without the need for coercive violence. These elites would give sense to notions of nations, states, and traditions so long as they were useful for their purposes.[105] "Freer and more robust than any other", the elites would lead "a revolt that would "demolish machinery and exterior, inorganic, automatic, and violent dependency, break the economic-capitalistic yoke, and taunt the duty of work imposed as a universal law and end-in-itself, that would in sum, liberate…"[106] Ominously, the guiding force behind Evola's aristocratic elite was a notion of race that included biological and spiritual components, and cast the Italians as a mixture of Nordic and Mediterranean, paternal and maternal, solar and lunar, influences.

Though Evola's ultra-reactionary positions appear to place him at the margins of Italian fascism,[107] he did exercise a certain influence, with references to his ideas appearing in Italian colonial publications. For instance, before becoming an apolitical esoteric, Massimo Scaligero approved of Italian racial laws in a series of articles inspired by Evola. Such laws, Scaligero believed, would allow for the universal Roman spiritual synthesis of North and South to expand its influence into the Mediterranean.[108] Others however bemoaned the general incomprehension of Evola. Five years after the publication of *Pagan Imperialism*, an anonymous author penned an article lecturing Italians on the true meaning

105 Ibid., pp. 85-93.

106 Ibid., p. 110.

107 For an argument stressing Evola's marginalization, see Gregor, *Mussolini's Intellectuals*, pp. 191-221. Gregor sees Evola's racism and anti-Semitism as in opposition to Giovanni Gentile's actualism and the corporative theories of figures like Sergio Panunzio and Ugo Spirito.

108 *Etiopia (Latina)*, Massimo Scaligero, "Come la Roma originaria afferma il suo diritto mediterraneo", April 1939; "La stirpe e la perennità dell'Impero", April 1940.

of empire. Complaining that "everyone talks of empire at every step of the way and in every occasion", the author claimed that no one really knew what it meant. Whereas most reduced the term to "exclusively economic-territorial-administrative" meanings, Evola had shown the deeper truth by revealing that empire was a command of the self. Only after acknowledging this metaphysical truth could a real imperial structure follow. To strengthen his argument, the author pointed out that even Mussolini had stated that one could speak of empire even where no territorial empire existed.[109] Though such calls to esoteric spirituality had little chance of resounding in Italian society, it was true that Mussolini had read Evola, and felt that his notions of a spiritual race-based elite established through an imperium could prove useful. Indeed, a diluted form of Evola's conception of hierarchical command insinuated itself into the Italian racial laws of 1938. In colonial circles, the maintenance of strict racial segregation was partly justified by a desire for the Italian race to elevate itself through its exercising of power. As Ruth Ben-Ghiat has claimed, "Africa presented an opportunity for fascists to refashion and modernize Italians in ways that would improve their image and prepare them for the demands of total war".[110] Evola's notion of empire, though certainly idiosyncratic, thus contributed to a larger discourse favored by the regime that defined empire as not only control over other peoples, but over oneself.[111]

Others who were not quite so reactionary and esoteric as Evola shared his belief that the Mediterranean was a space uniquely capable of resisting unwanted elements of

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109 *Cirenaica Illustrata*, 20Miglia, "Il Primo Impero", February 1933.

110 Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley, 2001), pp. 130.

111 Gentile has remarked upon the importance of this definition of empire among Italian fascists. Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra*, pp. 198-200.

modernity. For the literature professor Ercole Rivalta, the Mediterranean was the "heart of the human race", and every civilization that aspired to develop without roots in the Mediterranean was condemned to wither and die. America's obsession with the ephemeral and Soviet Russia's "fearful phenomenon of destruction" served as proof of the immortal life of the Mediterranean. But unsurprisingly, Rivalta's Mediterranean was one defined by Rome, which had synthesized its own civil and social values with the aesthetic values of Greece and religious values of Jerusalem.[112] For Ezra Pound, who would later become a propagandist for fascist Italy during the war, the Mediterranean's ancient traditions enabled the region to synthesize different values and perspectives, creating an equilibrium and sanity lacking elsewhere in the world.[113]

Though spiritualist conceptions of the Mediterranean were popular with writers and artists, there were differences in their interpretations. For the eclectic journalist and critic Eugenio Giovannetti (1883-1951), who had done his own mystical and traditionalist studies before publishing *The Twilight of Liberalism* in 1917, those who privileged the patriarchal and hierarchical were advocating the dark forces of the irrational over love. Whereas Evola rejected Christianity, Giovannetti held a traditionalist view that saw Christ as a healthy maternal figure of love.[114] For Giovannetti, the Mediterranean itself served as an inspiration for eternal transformation, the balancing of Apollonian and Dionysian forces,

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112 *Il Mediterraneo*, Ercole Rivalta, "Lo Spirito Mediterraneo", June 1938.

113 William M. Chace, *The Political Identities of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot* (Stanford, 1973), pp. 38-40.

114 "Giovannetti, Eugenio", *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Treccani Encyclopedia, Vol. 55 (2001). Giovannetti, far from being a traditionalist shut off from the modern world, wrote a book on cinema and the mechanic arts in 1930.

and the victory of fantasy and imagination against the static forces of telluric reality.[115] Giovannetti was not alone in hoping to find religious values in the Mediterranean. The writer and Senator Alfredo Baccelli, who had begun as a positivist before turning to mysticism,[116] was profoundly touched by a trip to Egypt. Recounting his experiences visiting al-Azhar, Baccelli argued that Islam was worthy of Italian respect, since it led to a "zeal for life, a working reality" that scented the air with "the breath of the beyond that renders it sacred!". Those who crossed the Mediterranean, the "mother of civilizations" to study there "almost seemed to aim at joining themselves with the mysteries of creation."[117]

Whether out of conviction or of practical concerns, such spiritual and aesthetic descriptions of the Mediterranean often served fascist interests. When describing the lessons that could be learned about the Mediterranean from Sardinia's way of life and history, Giovannetti highlighted the island's many jurists. The most notable of these was Domenico Azuni, the "proponent of a political-juridical conception of the Mediterranean", that would bring about a "Mediterranean order and secure the harmony of interests and rights." Such an order would not be theoretical or abstract, as in liberal claims to free-trade, but as a "concrete conquest of armed right".[118] Such claims to a new Mediterranean political-legal-economic order, however, generally pertained to more pragmatic Italians who wrote about geopolitics and international economics.

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115 *Il Mediterraneo,* Eugenio Giovannetti, "L'educazione Mediterranea", June 1938.

116 "Baccelli, Alfredo", Treccani, Dizionario Biografico, http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alfredo-baccelli_(Dizionario-Biografico)/

117 *Il Mediterraneo,* Alfredo Baccelli, "Terra di Religioni: Terza visita: La moschea di El-Azhar", July 1935.

118 *Il Mediterraneo,* Eugenio Giovannetti, "Sardegna", September 1937.

As a sign of the importance of geopolitical studies to the regime, Giuseppe Bottai sponsored Ernesto Massi's review *Geopolitica*, which debuted in January 1939. Massi (1909-1997), who had previously hoped to add what he called "dynamic" factors such as colonialism, trade-flows, and nationalist movements into the study of geography, was inspired by the German geopolitical school then led by Karl Haushofer. With Bottai's help, Massi worked out Italian-centered geopolitical ideas that depicted a world unfairly exploited by the "Great Democracies". Colonial collaboration between poorer countries like Italy and wealthier powers like Great Britain and France would then bring about a more prosperous and just world.[119] As such, Massi and his review hoped to bring the science of geography and empirical economic databases together to point the way to a technocratic solution to Corradini's complaint that Italy had been reduced to a proletarian nation.

Even before Massi gained regime patronage, one of the more popular geopolitical ideas justifying Italian expansionism was that of Eurafrica. A common subject among French and German economists, politicians, and technocrats in the interwar years, the potential construction of a Eurafrican system promised to create peaceful European collaboration through a shared and equitable development of Africa.[120] Such a project would prevent inter-European wars while guaranteeing European economic and political

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119 David Atkinson, "Geopolitical Imaginations in Modern Italy", in Klaus Dodds and David Atkinson (eds.), *Geopolitical Traditions: A century of geopolitical thought* (London, 2000), pp. 93-107.

120 For a European history of the Eurafrican concept, see Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafrica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism* (London, 2015).

sovereignty against the potential geopolitical blocs of the Americas and Asia. Some Italians argued that their nation and its fascist principles were particularly well-suited for such an endeavor. Attempts at working out Italian involvement in Eurafrica were made in the Volta Congresses in Rome in 1932 and 1938, although the latter presaged a more revisionist, German-Italian version.

The foremost Eurafrican advocate in Italy was Paolo d'Agostino Orsini di Camerota. Di Camerota hoped to assert the pre-eminent role of Italy in any Eurafrican structure. The underlying assumption was similar to that of Corradini: Italy's energy, as manifested in a high birthrate and mass emigration, would provide a labor supply for under-developed areas.[121] By the 1930s, such claims had more to do with fascist aspirations than reality,[122] but di Camerota was undeterred. So long as Italian colonists could maintain their citizenship, they could be effectively put to work in those climates in Africa that allowed for Europeans, even if Italy was not in direct control. However, a broad but peaceful revision of the political division of Africa would be necessary for an equitable European collaboration.[123]

Eurafrica therefore had much to offer a fascist vision of the Mediterranean. As di Camerota argued, the Mediterranean would "weld Eurafrica together", since the sea now

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121 Paolo d'Agostino Orsini Di Camerota, *Eurafrica: L' Europa per l'Africa, l'Africa per l'Europa* (Rome, 1934), pp. 128-132.

122 The regime, worried that Italy faced demographic decline, attempted to turn its birthrate around with a variety of pro-natalist policies, none of which had much success. Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The problem of population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 174-184.

123 Di Camerota, *Eurafrica*, pp. 227-230.

played a unifying rather than dividing role. Northern Africa had been made the southern coast of Europe thanks to a dense system of infrastructure on the Mediterranean with shipping lines and above it with new aerial networks. The "single outlet" for Africa's products and resources would be the Mediterranean.[124] Thus Italian preponderance in its "mare nostrum" would secure the well-being of Europe as a whole.

Unlike figures like D'Annunzio and Evola who hoped for something of a spiritual revival against crass materialism, di Camerota spoke in clear economic terms that would appeal more to the nationalist and conservative fascists, as well as to businessmen and industrialists. Economic policy would dictate social policy since di Camerota valued practicality over idealism- despite the grandiose nature of his project.[125] And like Europe's conservatives and liberals who also dreamed of Eurafrica, di Camerota did not allow for any African voices to be expressed. The Africans would help the Europeans with their labor, "willing or not".[126] The solution to integrating such a labor force peaceably into European dominated institutions and structures would be achieved through some expansion of the Italian corporatist system to encompass Africans, though the details would have to be clarified with time and practice.[127] Such corporative organizations, along with a large Italian labor pool, would be the primary contribution of fascism to the Eurafrican project.

By the late 1930s, Eurafrica became an ever more unlikely policy choice for fascist Italy as war with Great Britain and France increasingly appeared more likely than

124 Ibid., pp. 150-151.
125 Ibid., 95.
126 Ibid., 96.
127 Ibid., 268-270.

collaboration. Yet the schemes of di Camerota are emblematic of a more technical and economic, but perhaps no less fascist vision of what Italian expansion into the Mediterranean would entail. The focus on emigrant Italian labor, the spread of fascist state institutions, the assumptions that a strict European hierarchy would go unchallenged, the notion that only expansionism could guarantee Italian national sovereignty: all these principles of Italian Eurafrica constituted one possible way of conceiving a fascist geopolitical space based on the Mediterranean. And though Eurafrica heavily stressed inter-European collaboration, the broad ideas could be easily fit into one of Axis collaboration.

The central articulations of the Mediterranean-as the Italian-site of a new Roman Empire, a nodal point for a vast technocratic project, an outlet and incubator for Italian spiritual energies, and a refuge from modernity- all shared aspects with French conceptions. Yet the Italians became singularly focused on how to turn the Mediterranean into a geopolitical space dominated by Italy, not a Franco-Italian condominium. As the primacy of Italy became clearer to French rightists who sympathized with or even supported Fascist Italy, co-operation became difficult. Yet the efforts made in the 1930s by French rightists to see the good in Italy nevertheless highlights how the shared discourse of Latinity and the Mediterranean as a unified space opened up a space in which French nationalists could propose a kind of joint-imperial project to salvage a colonialism under siege from Wilsonian principles, colonial independence movements, and Bolshevism.

THE FAILURE OF FRANCO-ITALIAN RIGHTIST COOPERATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Though engaged in a geopolitical contest in the Mediterranean, Italian and French officials still had occasions to congratulate each other on their colonial achievements and the construction of a "Latin" North Africa. A potential conflict was possible, but so was increased co-operation. As such, the discourse of Latinity served as a useful tool, as did the respect officials sometimes reciprocated to each other in public. Even during the Popular Front period when relations between the two countries had deteriorated, the French still thought it necessary to build a pavilion for the March 1937 Tripoli fair, since the presence of Mussolini would lend special attention to the event. The event symbolized the attempts by officials from both countries to find common ground even during a period of diplomatic tensions. Following Italian suggestions, the French pavilion focused on the infrastructural development of colonies, in what was likely an attempt to shift the justification of imperialism to an area in which the Italians invested heavily. Several important Italian figures visited the pavilion, including the Minister of Communications and former president of the General Confederation of Italian Industry, Antonio Stefano Benni, the founder of Fiat, Giovanni Agnelli, the prominent regime figure and Minister of Education Giuseppe Bottai, Marshal Badoglio, all accompanied by the Governor-General Balbo. While the Italians demonstrated a mixture of respect towards French colonialism, and defensiveness in regard to their own accomplishments, Badoglio found a common ground

by invoking Hubert Lyautey and Joseph Gallieni when visiting the stands for Morocco and Madagascar.[128]

Badoglio was wise to do so, as Lyautey served as a unifying figure for French-Italian co-operation. The devout Catholic Lyautey served as the pre-eminent French model for a conservative, yet modern colonial hand. As the Resident-General of Morocco from 1912-1916, Lyautey favored a hybrid approach to colonial governance that sought to support local Moroccan hierarchies and social structures on one hand while facilitating the construction of ultra-modern European urban centers on the other.[129] In short, Lyautey hoped to soften the blow of French-imposed modernity. Like Psichari, Lyautey desired the restoration of traditional, and even mystical values, in French society through the army's engagement with rural North Africans, while simultaneously acting as a Cartesian planner who, as Timothy Mitchell has argued, created the category of a "traditional Orient" in order to better define "French modernity."[130]

For Italians who wanted to turn Libya into a "fourth-shore" of Italian modernity while also maintaining an "authentic" Libya of spiritual values and tourist destinations, the famous career of Lyautey served as a clear model. And indeed, the Governor-General of Libya, Italo Balbo, mimicked the French aristocrat in several prominent ways, asserting that "no one admires him more than I".[131] Like his model in Fez, Balbo ruled in Tripoli as

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128 CAD-N, FM AGEFOM//494, Dossier 6 Foire de Tripoli, 1937, N. 2688, 31 December 1936; "Procès-verbal", 29 December 1936; "Rapport de Monsieur Bruni", Undated.

129 For these two broad components of Lyautey's Moroccan policy, see William A. Hoisington, Jr, *Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco* (New York, 1995), pp. 41-53, 109-134.

130 Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 161-165.

131 Claudio G. Segrè, *Italo Balbo* (Bologna, 1988), p. 353.

something of a Renaissance prince transplanted to North Africa, always careful to cultivate the appearance of a modern, yet Oriental court dispensing patronage and arbitrating local issues between banquets and military ceremonies with native soldiers. Balbo also presented himself as an urban modernizer who would provide the finest facilities for Italians while protecting the traditional spaces of Libyans. While the urban programs were not necessarily unique to Balbo, his charismatic personality and skill in propaganda attached his name to such projects. While Balbo's biographer is right to argue that Balbo "found his own way" of governing, it is clear that the career of Lyautey served as a critical inspiration.

As a result, it should be no surprise that when seventy French veterans and reserve officers visited Tripoli under the guidance of the French general Ursman Somon, they provided Balbo with a medal decorated with an effigy of Lyautey to commemorate Latin colonization in African lands.[132] At times, the Italians would praise Lyautey: the main story of the December 1935 issue of *Il Mediterraneo* heaped fulsome praise on the recently deceased general, noting his respect for Islam, his patriotism, and his search for a metaphysical unity that would bring humanity together.[133]

Though Balbo and Lyautey never met, the former did host a lesser known, but still emblematic French colonial figure in 1935-Captain Gabriel Carbillet. Carbillet, unlike Lyautey, did not favor the promotion of native elites, preferring instead the introduction of modernity into colonies through shock methods. The outcome of Carbillet's approach in

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132 ASMAE, MAI Gabinetto Segreto, B. 143, F. Vario: Consolato Francese a Tripoli, Balbo to Lessona, 26 March 1937.

133 *Il Mediterraneo*, "Il Maresciallo Lyautey", December 1935.

the Syrian Jabal Druze, which Daniel Neep has called Mandate Syria's "most extreme example of Republican Utopianism", was a major factor in the Syrian Revolt of 1925-1927.[134] The controversial officer then moved to southern Algeria along the Libyan border, where he continued to experiment in colonial modernity, particularly in the sphere of urban-planning. Since Carbillet was responsible for maintaining good relations with Italian border units, he was in correspondence with Balbo; a relationship that culminated in Carbillet's tour of Libya.

As the visit coincided with the signing of the Laval-Mussolini Accords of 1935, Carbillet had cause to look upon Italy with sympathetic eyes in his lengthy report on what he saw. His impressions reveal a sincere admiration for the fascist colonial project, despite his leftist inclinations. Time and time again, the French officer remarked upon the modernity of the architecture and urban-planning of Tripoli and Benghazi. The recently built settler villages in Cyrenaica particularly impressed Carbillet, since they all followed the same plan, but with houses and churches built in different and "very elegant" architectural styles. Furthermore, he believed that the town square buildings represented a "great moral force" that inculcated fascist and national values. In conclusion, Carbillet thought that Italy was rapidly transforming Libya, and in doing so, had proven that they would be a worthy ally of France.[135] Following this tour, Carbillet invited an Italian counter-part, Colonel Moccia, to visit the oasis of Ouargla, the pride and joy of Carbillet's

134 Neep, *Occupying* Syria, pp. 67-75.

135 ANOM, GGA, Algérie, Tripolitania 36MIOM/104, "Rapport du Lieutenant-Colonel Carbillet, Commandant Militaire du Territoire des Oasis sur son voyage en Lybie", Undated.

local modernization efforts. Such an occasion would allow the French and Italian officers a "closer collaboration in the struggle for civilization".[136] However, Carbillet's contacts did cause some concerns: General Noguès recommended to the Governor-General of Algeria that the correspondence between Balbo and Carbillet constituted a security risk, while his desire to frequently meet with Italians would allegedly lower the prestige of France in the eyes of Algerians.[137] Such reprimands and strained tensions did not greatly change Carbillet's attitude. When Mussolini visited Libya in March 1937, Carbillet sent a telegram to Balbo apologizing that bad weather had kept him from coming, and assuring him of his desire to continue their "fruitful Latin collaboration."[138]

Carbillet was not the only representative of the French colonial establishment who admired fascist Italy. The Resident-General of Tunisia from 1933-1936, Marcel Peyrouton, went so far as to allow his sympathies for Italy influence his political decisions. Before taking up his new post, Peyrouton interviewed the Italian consul in Algiers, who came away impressed by the "prototype of a new French functionary…deeply Latin in education, spirit, and substance." During the interview, Peyrouton remarked upon his admiration for "youthful Italy" and his support for Italy's demographic colonization plans in the Mediterranean.[139] Two years later, after the first Italian military victories against the Ethiopians, Peyrouton congratulated the Italian consul in Tunis, Enrico Bombieri, telling

136 Ibid., Carbillet to Noguès, "Relations avec les autorités Italiennes", 12 February 1936.
137 Ibid., Noguès to Le Beau, "A/S visite du Colonel Moccia à Ouargla", 19 February 1936.
138 ASMAE, Gabinetto Segreto, B. 143, F. Vario: Consolato francese a Tripoli, Balbo to Lessona, 23 March 1937.
139 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 4, F. Rapporti Politici 1933, Consul-Algiers to MAE, "Nuovo residente generale in Tunisia", 27 July 1933.

him in private that the only French opposed to Italy's war were part of "international Jewry or anti-fascists."[140] Both Italian consuls believed that Peyrouton's attitude towards Italy was sincere. Their faith was rewarded by Peyrouton's actions as Resident-General.

In response to growing threats from unions and Tunisian nationalist movements, Peyrouton employed a series of repressive measures aimed at restoring the administration's control over Tunisian politics. As part of this authoritarian turn, Peyrouton moved against Italian communists and anti-fascists, to the satisfaction of the Italian consulate. Furthermore, he gave the consulate a largely free hand in policing their own affairs- a tacit permission for the consulate to crack down on Italian leftists. As Juliette Bessis has remarked, "any debates on the Italian question in Tunisia and on fascism were stifled." [141] Though Peyrouton took the geopolitical threat of Italy seriously by bolstering the French military presence in Tunisia, he clearly saw allies in the Italian fascists in tamping down any forms of colonial resistance. Sidelined by the Popular Front in 1936, Peyrouton would later become the first Minister of the Interior under the Vichy government and help pass laws persecuting Jews and free-masons. Named as Governor-General of Algeria after the American occupation, he would try to delay the repeal of those laws before resigning in May 1943.[142]

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140 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 5, F. Rapporti Politici 1935, Consul-Tunis to MAE, "Conflitto Italo-Etiopico", 7 October 1935.

141 Juliette Bessis, *La Méditerranée Fasciste: L'Italie mussolinenne et la Tunisie* (Paris, 1980), pp. 157-159.

142 Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Aux origines de la guerre d'Algérie 1940-1945: De Mers-el-Kébir aux massacres du Nord-Constantinois* (Paris, 2002), pp. 113-115.

Peyrouton's acquiescence to Italian authorities was particularly striking given the long-standing tensions between Italy and France in the Tunisian Protectorate. The presence of an Italian settler population larger than that of France made the French conquest of Tunisia in 1881 difficult to swallow for Italians. The Italians finally recognized the protectorate in an 1896 Convention that protected Italian fishing rights, schools, legal professions, and most critically, nationality. Thus, the Italians had salvaged something of a "state within a state".[143] Even in 1938, according to Bessis, the Italians significantly outnumbered the French, with a population perhaps one and a half times greater.[144] During the 1920s and 1930s, the fascists exerted great efforts to bring these Italians into the life of the regime through control over schools, cultural and work associations, and the main Italian newspaper, *L'Unione*, while also working to prevent naturalizations.[145] Even accounting for a noticeable group of anti-fascists among Tunisia's Italians,[146] fascist activities heightened tensions between the two communities.

Despite the uneasy relations between French and Italians authorities and settlers, there were moments when the discourse of Latin unity brought the communities together. Perhaps nothing lent itself more to such displays of friendship as the events commemorating World War I. The experience saw the two nations in an alliance that provided a shared traumatic memory with a binding power for the participants. Though the

143 Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881-1938* (Berkeley, 2014), pp. 55-59.
144 Bessis, *La Méditerranée Fasciste*, pp. 15-19.
145 Ibid., pp. 59-66.
146 Leila El Houssi, "Italians in Tunisia: between regional organization, cultural adaptation and political division, 1860s-1940", *European Review of History*, Vol. 19, 1 (2012), pp. 173-176.

Italian interventionists, including Mussolini, had made much of the need to defend a republican and revolutionary France against the stultifying autocratic Germans,[147] the turn to fascist authoritarianism meant that the shared discourse would now focus entirely on the less explicitly political concept of Latinity.

In 1932, on the anniversary of the Italian entry into the war, the Italian colony invited French veterans to join them for the ceremonies. At the main reception, four of the French representatives gave speeches expressing their friendship with Italy, and the required visit to the Monument to the Fallen included both the Italian and French sites in order to emphasize Latin solidarity.[148] Another plea for unity came in early 1933, when the French Radical-Socialist deputy Louis Proust gave a speech at a banquet chaired by the Resident-General and attended by important leaders from both communities. Proust argued that the French and Italians would work towards Latin unity by sharing the project of civilizing North Africa, a theme later emphasized by the Eurafricanists. The basis for the project was to be found less in the Roman past so commonly talked about, but in the experience of the Great War. Discarding the rhetoric employed during the war, Proust remembered the conflict in a fascist sense, describing how Latin fraternity was "formed on the battlefield, where the enthusiasm for struggle and for the community of danger made the war bearable". Despite the daily divisions that pulled the two communities apart, Proust

147 As Stefano Fabei has argued, the interventionist arguments that focused on the cultural-civilizational unity of France and Italy constituted a step forward on the path to the syndicalists' embrace of Italian nationalism, Stefano Fabei, *Guerra e proletariato, 1914: Il Sindacalismo Rivoluzionario dalla neutralità all'interventismo* (Milan, 1996), pp. 95-96.

148 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 3, F. Rapporti Politici, "Commemorazione 24 Maggio a Tunisi", 25 May 1932.

believed that the patriotic ceremonies recalling the glory of The Great War would serve as the guarantee of their continued unity.[149] The myth of communal blood-shedding as a basis for a sacred national bond then popular in fascist Italy could then be transferred to the Latin identity by the French.[150]

Yet at times, Franco-Italian demonstrations were not much appreciated by the Italian consul. When the Committee of the Franco-Italian League met in April 1933, under the guidance of its president, the naturalized-French Edmond Boccara, and his long-time friend, the French deputy Valensi, Bombieri dismissed their event as largely a means of protecting the interests of Jews.[151] Italian authorities looked suspiciously on those Italians who were either Jewish or had taken on French citizenship. Collaboration would then only be encouraged if the divisions between the two communities were clearly delineated.

The period of 1935-1936 proved to be the turning point in Franco-Italian relations in Tunisia. On 7 January 1935, Mussolini and the French Prime Minister Pierre Laval finalized the Rome Accords, largely signed out of a French desire to find allies against Nazi Germany. Italy benefited most from the accords, with the French making small colonial concessions and essentially giving Italy a free-hand in Ethiopia in exchange for Italian concessions in Tunisia. The Italian community in Tunisia, protected from French naturalization laws by the Convention of 1896, would enjoy such benefits for another ten

149 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 4, F. Rapporti Politici, Consul-General Tunis to MAE, "Discorso Deputato francese Proust", 5 January 1933.
150 Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio: La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (Bari, 2009), p. 29.
151 ASMAE, Ibid., Consul-General to MAE, "Manifestazione franco-italiana", 19 April 1933.

years. But after 1965, third-generation Italian settlers would have to take French citizenship. Though the Laval-Mussolini Accords favored Italy, French officials in Tunisia hoped to use the agreement as a basis for defusing tensions. As a result, many French officials and newspapers, like the pro-administrative *Dépêche Tunisienne* spent much of the year praising the Italian authorities in Tunisia as well as the fascist regime and its actions. As Bessis has pointed out, the ensuing months saw a mixture of Italian and French officials at every public event and ceremony, thus legitimating the very Italian institutions designed to strengthen Italian claims to sovereignty over Tunisia.[152]

During these collaborative events, the rhetoric tended to normalize and apologize for fascist Italy. About two months after the Accords, the Dante Alighieri Society of Bizerte could claim a newfound interest among the French, with one hundred mostly French "Friends of Dante" joining the eight hundred Italian members.[153] In the meantime, the French journalist Pierre Grivel had given a conference on Stendhal and Italy for the Society. The consul in Bizerte was pleased with the event; not only did Grivel praise the Italian regime, but the "political and diplomatic aspects outweighed the literary aspects", and showed that such conferences were a useful tool in keeping a pulse on French feelings towards Italy.[154]

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152 Bessis, *La Méditerranée Fasciste*, pp. 163-171.

153 ACS, Minculpop 18/7, B. 246, Tunisia 1933-1938, Consul-Tunisia to Pres. Dante Alighieri, 13 March 1935.

154 ACS, Ibid., Vice-Consul-Bizerte to Bombieri, "Conferenza Pierre Grivel alla Dante Alighieri", 9 February 1935.

Yet the sudden outpouring of French goodwill towards the Italians, encouraged by the policies of Peyrouton, began to deteriorate with the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935. With a weak set of sanctions imposed on Italy by the League of Nations, and reluctantly followed by Laval, fervent Italian fascists began to hurl invectives at the French on the streets and in newspapers. Those Tunisians, French, and Italians who had long opposed fascism found a new reason to criticize the Italian regime. Yet those French who still hoped to maintain good relations, whether for diplomatic reasons or a genuine sympathy for Italy or fascism, continued to promote a Latin union. Local fascist institutions like the Dante Society continued to serve this function; the President of the Society organized a series of conferences in Tunisia to justify the Italian invasion, which led to such large audiences that organizers used loudspeakers for those who could not fit in the rooms. Among those in attendance were numerous French settlers, who allegedly came to show their sympathy for Italy and its government.[155]

For French rightist settlers, the situation called for more than just passive sympathy for Italy. Public demonstrations of unity were required to maintain the Latin union. While French rightist papers defended the alleged civilizing mission of Italy, others showed their support in Italian political demonstrations. On one occasion, French veterans attended a ceremony celebrating the anniversary of the March on Rome, which included speeches attacking Great Britain and a rendition of the Marseillaise.[156] In another, during a

155 ACS, Ibid., President of Dante Alighieri Society to Min. della Stampa, 26 November 1935.
156 CAD-N, 1TU/1/V/2137, N. 4.479, Chef de la Sûreté to Commissaire Principal, 28 October 1935.

conference held by the Dante Alighieri Society on Ethiopia, and attended by 450, an Italian professor urged the French to ally with Italy against Great Britain, citing the latter's burning of Joan of Arc and exiling of Napoleon. As the audience began to leave, a French colonel stood up and gave a short speech claiming that Italy was fully within its rights to bring Latin civilization to a "barbarous" people.[157]

Finally, in December 1935, rightist French settlers organized a conference on the Ethiopian issue, with three hundred attending, including many Italians. The main speaker, a certain M. de Lorrières, attacked the British Prime Minister Anthony Eden as another member of an international Masonic plot opposed to fascism. Furthermore, he praised Mussolini as a "modern Caesar", predicting that the French would look to the light of Rome to create their own national idea and calling for French and Italians to pursue the Latin ideal together.[158] Yet similar calls for unity by Italians could be rather duplicitous, as a French agent reported that the fascist deputy Bartolo Gianturco gave a speech conciliatory to France before attacking the country in front of an Italian audience on the same day.[159]

Similarly, a speaking tour of Tunisia by Marinetti in 1936 further demonstrated the growing gaps in the Latin identity and the ways in which Italian speakers could address different audiences. In his Italian speeches, Marinetti talked about his recent experiences as a volunteer "poet-soldier" in Ethiopia. But when speaking in French, his talks on "The

157 CAD-N, 1TU/1/V/2133 2M:528, N. 3414, "A.S. Conférence à la 'Dante Alighieri'", 3 December 1935.
158 CAD-N, 1TU/1/V/2137, N. 345 D/2, Inspector La Croix to the Chef de la Sûreté, "La France et l'Italie de l'Armistice aux Sanctions", 20 December 1935.
159 Ibid., N. 3037, "Politique Italienne" 4 November 1935.

Mediterranean and its Dynamism" were framed in a more universal language. But Marinetti still provided hints that his futurist conception of the Mediterranean was tied to fascist expansionism, citing the need to unify the many Mediterraneans, while claiming that the particular brilliance of Italy was its dual interest in art and war that constituted a form of "armed-poetry". As *Tunis-Soir* remarked, Marinetti's desire to see the multiplicity of the Mediterranean united into a single space not so subtly implied that Italy would assert control over its competitors. While Marinetti's celebrity may have caused a stir with French spectators, his longstanding admiration for war and ties to fascism was a cause for concern for those listening closely.[160]

French rightists continued to push for collaboration into 1937 in several meetings of the fascist Parti Populaire Français. In front of 270 French and 30 Italian spectators, Lorrières continued his early campaign, now calling Mussolini an ally in a fight against "the Asiatic and communist threat",[161] while another meeting of 300 featured several speakers who spoke highly of the youth culture of Italy and the need for a rapprochement between the Latin countries.[162] Yet as Italian foreign policy fell increasingly in line with German interests, the hopes of Franco-Italian collaboration in Tunisia and elsewhere became untenable. Finally, on 30 November 1938, inspired by the Munich concessions, the Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano delivered a speech in front of the Chamber of

160 ASMAE, Tunisia B. 6, 1936, F. Miscellanea, Consul-Tunis to MAE, "Conferenza di S.E. Marinetti a Tunisi", 27 November 1936.

161 ASMAE, Tunisia B. 8, Consulate-Tunis to MAE, 9 April 1937.

162 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 7, N. 2616116/187, MAE to Embassy-Paris, "Riunione di propaganda del P.P.F. al cinema "Alhambra", 14 May 1937.

Deputies in which he called for the satisfaction of the "natural aspirations" of the Italian people. Those in the audience, and the Italian press at large in the following days, insisted that Italy lay claim to Nice, Savoy, Corsica, and Tunisia.[163] At this point, the long-envisioned possibility of an Italian annexation of Tunisia became a critical component of Italian foreign policy. The French settlers in Tunisia responded with anger to the increasingly public Italian threats, and any possibility of a union between rightist nationalists had been scuttled.[164] Some still tried to keep the union alive by appealing to the old rhetoric: the President of the Association of Colons in Massicault, Jean Rodrigues, gathered one hundred Italian farmers to plead for their loyalty, pointing out that the rupture had only occurred because of the Popular Front, but that the French would only respect fascism if it restored Italy's place in the world through peaceful measures. Finally, Rodrigues implored his audience to speak to the Italian consulate, and tell them that "Latin fraternity is not a slogan devoid of meaning." Despite such local efforts, the fascist commitment to Mediterranean expansionism at the cost of France had ended any plausible opportunities for international rightist colonial collaboration.

While irreconcilable geopolitical differences were clear enough, even the forms of shared discourse began to transform into purely nationalist ideas. Starting in the mid-1930s, the Italians began to subsume some of the common themes of Latinity into the myth of

163 Reynolds M. Salerno, *Vital Crossroads: Mediterranean Origins of the Second World War, 1935-1940* (Ithaca, 2002), pp. 81-86.

164 For the reactions of the French and Tunisians to the Italian claims, see Bessis, *Méditerranée fasciste*, pp. 244-248, and Romero Rainero, *La Rivendicazione fascista sulla Tunisia* (Milan, 1978), pp. 318-320.

Romanitas. Since Romanitas was intensely bound up with fascist goals and Italian nationalism, it decisively excluded French participation. And once Romanitas had overtaken Latinity among Italians, the French who had clung to Latinity were left out in the cold. No longer concerned with garnering the support of French rightists, Italy would instead increasingly appeal to Tunisians in order to undermine French rule, an attempt that will be explored in Chapter Two.

While Italian ambitions ended the influence of Latinity in Tunisia, French nationalists curbed similar desires for unity in Algeria. French Algeria was more fertile ground for the success of Latinity. Just as Tunisia had a large Italian settler population, Algeria saw large currents of seasonal, and some permanent immigration from Italy, Spain, and Malta. For these poor southern Europeans, Algeria was a cheap and close destination, and they tended to gather in coastal cities as small artisans and workers, with Italians choosing Constantine, Bône (Annaba) and Algiers, and the Spanish flocking to Oran.[165] Government efforts to settle the countryside with French citizens struggled and no efforts were made to limit non-French immigration, creating a heterogenous European population.[166] However, there were significant differences between Algeria and Tunisia. While Italy had always asserted its rights in Tunisia, it did not contest French legitimacy in Algeria, despite the presence of a sizeable Italian community largely based in the eastern

165 David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 85-91, 124, 140-146.

166 Hugo Vermeren, "Les migrations françaises et européennes vers l'Algérie au début de la III Republique", in Abderrahmane Bouchène, Jean-Pierre Peyroulou, Ouanassa Siari Tengour, Sylvie Thénault (ed.), *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période coloniale, 1830-1962*, (Paris, 2012), pp. 194-199.

department of Constantine. In Tunisia, the Italians successfully negotiated the 1896 Convention with France that allowed Italians in Tunisia to maintain their nationality, thus placing Italians under a type of dual-sovereignty. In Algeria, the Naturalization Law of 1889 turned any non-French European born in Algeria into a French citizen so long as they did not object. Though the naturalization law prevented the kind of interference practiced by Italy in Tunisia, it came with its own challenges for French settlers. For some French-Algerians, the recently naturalized French were "néo-Français" who had maintained too much of their original identities and cultures to ever become truly French. And their numbers were significant: in 1891, there were 152,000 Spanish nationals to 268,000 French. [167] As many chose to accept French citizenship, the number of foreign nationals fell, but even in 1936 there were still 21,000 Italians and 92,000 Spanish nationals out of a European population of 815,000.[168] The identity of French-Algerians would therefore emerge from the steady intermingling of these different European populations.

At the turn of the century then, the European settler community in Algeria was a hybrid one, in which different communities had their own patois, and where the predominance of lower-class and recently naturalized Italians and Spaniards created a kind of rough-and-tumble culture characterized by an emphasis on masculinity and frequent tensions with Muslims and Jews. Politically, the French-Algerian identity tended to encourage distrust of the metropole. For the French settlers, the French government

167 Anne Dulphy, *L'Algérie des Pieds-Noirs entre l'Espagne et la France* (Paris, 2014), p. 10.
168 Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria: 1930-1954* (Rochester, 2002), p. 160.

constrained their rightful expropriation and use of Algerian land and labor, while many recently naturalized immigrants preferred to see their French-Algerian identity as distinct from a purely French one.[169] As a result, the French-Algerian population in the late-19th and early-20th centuries sought a unique geographical identity that could accommodate a variety of national pasts. Latinity therefore served as a powerful discursive tool for French-Algerian settlers to understand themselves and to unify the European population against the supposed threats from the French administration, Muslims, and Jews.

The early political manifestations of French-Algerian Latinity took a decidedly local flavor. In the midst of the Dreyfus Affair, a French-Algerian wave of anti-Semitism briefly united the diverse European populations behind Max Régis, a settler of Italian origin and the leader of the Algiers Anti-Semitic League. The targets of settler anger were the naturalized French Jewish community and a French administration that allegedly sought to curb settler ambitions in order to protect Algerians. For the Italians and Spanish, anti-Semitism served to highlight their own Catholic identity while lashing out against their lower social status vis-à-vis the French.[170] Furthermore, some leftists and socialists were drawn to anti-Semitism as a form of anti-capitalism; a visiting Jean Jaurès had to firmly condemn their stance.[171] Along with acts of violence against French Algerian Jews, French settlers elected Régis as mayor of Algiers along with several anti-Semitic deputies,

169 Ibid., pp. 188-208.
170 Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, pp. 202-205.
171 Charles-Robert Ageron, *De l'Algérie "française" à l'Algérie algérienne* (Paris, 2005), pp. 207-209.

including the noted journalist Edouard Drumont.[172] The French concession of budgetary powers to French-Algerians defused the crisis, but the events revealed the unsettling manner in which a uniquely French-Algerian identity could bring together diverse European groups at the expense of the Jewish community.[173]

The 1920s saw a recrudescence of French-Algerian anti-Semitism with the local success of the Unions Latines (UL) in the department of Oran. According to Samuel Kalman, the rise of this group marked the open embrace of far-rightist ideas in Algeria. Under the leadership of Dr. Jules Molle, and with incendiary newspapers like *Le Petit Oranais*, the UL railed against the alleged global Jewish involvement in monopoly capitalism and Bolshevik plots as well as local Jewish political efforts to block settler power by voting in bloc for the left. Though Molle and his followers attempted to maintain ties with more moderate republican conservatives, their dalliances with authoritarian far-rightist groups like the Action Française and the Jeunesses Patriotes were more natural fits for their radical stances. Despite frequent references to global affairs and conspiracies, local political practices still did much to shape the UL's views. In Algeria, where French male citizens enjoyed universal suffrage, and Algerian property-owners and civil servants could only vote for municipal elections, political parties relied on extensive patronage systems to garner votes rather than ideological platforms. Local leaders of districts would

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172 Sylvie Thénault, "1881-1918: l''apogée' de l'Algérie française et les débuts de l'Algérie algérienne", *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période coloniale*, pp. 163-164. For Drumont, see, Winock, *Nationalisme*, pp. 115-139.

173 Didier Guignard, "Les crises en trompe l'œil de l'Algérie française des années 1890", *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période coloniale*, pp. 218-223.

put great pressure on their population to vote for the candidates with whom they had good relations. Parties would often hold large events or give away food and wine to buy votes.[174] Since the tightly knit Jewish communities generally followed their religious leaders and wealthiest figures, political parties had to court these elites in order to gain the support of the majority of the Jewish population.[175] A backlash against the Jewish bloc finally broke out in Oran, whose Jewish population was proportionally larger than in any other Algerian city.[176] In 1924, Molle, then mayor of Oran, lost an election in which the Jewish bloc voted for his competitor. Molle believed the Jewish population took advantage of the split European community to play arbiter and thereby wield a disproportionate amount of power.[177] As a result, he viciously attacked the Jews on a number of levels. According to Molle, the Jews were naturally intolerant, opposed to any form of assimilation, and dedicated to using democracy and communism as a means to lessen the power of other elites so as to consolidate their own power.[178] In order to defeat the Jewish bloc, Molle hoped that a Latinist ideology that preached the union of the Spanish, Italian and French races could create a bloc capable of the same electoral discipline as the Jewish community. And while the unrest of the late 1890s did not make use of a discourse defining the basis

174 Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, pp. 184-190.
175 Elizabeth D. Friedman, *Colonialism and After: An Algerian Jewish Community* (South Hadley, 1988), pp. 17-18.
176 Samuel Kalman, "Le Combat par Tous les Moyens: Colonial Violence and the Extreme Right in 1930s Oran", *French Historical Studies*, 34 (2011), p. 132.
177 Jules Molle, *Le Néo-Antisémitisme: Recueil d'articles originaux* (Millau, 1933), pp. 92-93, 100-101.
178 Ibid., pp. 19-20, 23-24.

for European settler unity, the UL had cultural resources to draw from to justify the political union of "Latins" against "Jews", and "Bolsheviks".

At the same time that Régis briefly upset Algerian politics, a novelist from Lorraine smitten by the Roman past of North Africa and the possibilities of a new Latin Algerian race published his first novel, *Le Sang des races*. Louis Bertrand, eventually elected to the Académie Française in 1925 on the strength of his Algerian novels and popularization of Latinity, depicted Spanish and Italian migrants as virile and adventurous figures who battled the climate, the obstructions of the French bureaucracy, and the decadence of Islamic culture to build a prosperous and civilized Algeria from the sweat of their brows. While Patricia Lorcin has argued that Bertrand's most notable contribution was to strengthen the racial barrier between Europeans and Arabs,[179] it should also be noted that he provided a particularly rightist interpretive lens for the new "Algerianist" French-Algerian identity. Whereas Maurice Barrès deplored the supposed decadence and degeneration of a French society increasingly uprooted from its soil and history, Bertrand saw in the Latin re-colonization of Algeria an opportunity for regeneration. At times, this even took the form of condemning the French in Algeria as weak and effeminate compared to their Spanish and Italian neighbors.[180] Bertrand and those novelists who built upon the Algerianist tradition thus created a common set of discursive themes that rightist settlers would increasingly draw upon in the 1930s.

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179 Lorcin, *Imperial Identities*, pp. 212-213.
180 Gosnell, *Politics of Frenchness*, p. 178.

While the death of Dr. Molle in 1931 marked a brief decline in the rightist political discourse of Latinity, the ever-expanding international crisis of the 1930s eventually brought the idea back into the mainstream of Algerian political culture, especially in its stronghold of Oran. Whereas the Unions Latines in the 1920s had added international conspiracy theories to local politics, the 1930s manifestation was strongly shaped by the sense of a global struggle between the Latin forces of Fascist Italy and Nationalist Spain against Communists, Jews, and Freemasons. Kalman's in-depth study of the French-Algerian right mentions the international influences of the 1930s, but the intensity of this connection should be elaborated on to fully understand the worldview of those mobilizing against the Popular Front and a variety of threats to the colonial order. For rightist settlers, the repercussions of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War had heightened the stakes of local politics. Furthermore, in rightist eyes, the Popular Front threatened to give France over to the communists and Algeria over to Muslims. Consequently, politics in the mid to late-1930s was an existential affair for the Algerian right. Starting in 1935, rightist French-Algerians responded by employing the discourse of Latinity as a weapon to unite French-Algerians in the defense of the colonial status-quo, attack the French Popular Front, and associate themselves with the rightist regimes of Spain and France.

The revitalization of the politics of Latinity revolved largely around the efforts of Gabriel Lambert, the mayor of Oran, and Lucien and Paul Bellat, a father-son team that controlled local politics in Sidi-Bel-Abbès. These figures represented the local rightist leadership in the department of Oran during the Popular Front period. For many French-

Algerians, the events surrounding the Popular Front's May 1936 electoral victory were worrisome: the ranks of the Socialist and Communist parties grew, strikes broke out, and perhaps most ominously, Algerians increasingly participated in leftist demonstrations while asserting their own claims through the Muslim Congress. The Algerian nationalist leader, Messali Hadj even made a spectacular call for independence at a meeting of the Muslim Congress. Many worried French Algerians felt like their world was collapsing. The first step to protecting the colonial order was to organize anti-leftist groups under a common movement. Thanks to leftist enthusiasm and divided rightist electoral lists, four Popular Front candidates out of ten managed to win parliamentary seats in an electorate that skewed heavily to the right. In Oran, rightists and conservatives split between Lambert and the Croix de Feu candidate, Marcel Gatuing. Blaming his loss on the department's Jews, Lambert quickly made amends with his former competitors and embraced a radical rightist vision for Algeria. Since Lambert remained the mayor of Oran, he still wielded considerable power, and quickly moved to unite the disparate Algerian rightist groups under his umbrella organization, the Rassemblement National pour l'Action Sociale (RNAS). Founded weeks after the 1936 election, the RNAS grouped together local parties like Lambert's Amitiés Lambert and the Unions Latines with national parties like the Croix de Feu and the Parti Populaire Français. Backed by substantial support from the local French press, local politicians, and from French-Algerian voters, the RNAS organized rallies, ensured opposition to Popular Front reforms, and encouraged violent reactions against Popular Front demonstrations in Algeria.

The new generation of leaders distinguished themselves from early Algerian advocates of a Latin identity by framing their Latin project in global terms. Speaking during a banquet held for Latin-American journalists, Lucien Bellat explained how "common origins, race, and thoughts should tie together the Spanish, true French, and Italians; in short all the peoples born from Rome. That would be, if you pardon the expression, a limited 'international' to which we would be able to devote our bodies and souls for the greatest benefit of our common interests." As an example of how a Latin power had been mistreated by the global order, Bellat cited the economic sanctions against Italy for its aggression in Ethiopia.[181] These were not just words intended for foreign consumption, but central to the Algerian Latinists analysis of their role in Mediterranean geopolitics. In an internal report on the status of the UL before the critical 1936 elections, the author feared that the combined forces of Jews, Soviets, and Freemasons would force France into a conflict with Italy. Such an outcome would be a disaster for the French Empire, since Italy would be a particularly valuable colonial ally, given that its application of fascist principles to Ethiopia would open up a "new colonial era".[182] At the same time, Paul Bellat wrote to a Latinist and UL candidate for deputy that everything possible had to be done to spread Latin ideals. To this end, he had sent an open letter attacking sanctions against Italy to Prime Minister Pierre Laval in the name of UL members, as well as ensuring that more articles based on Latinity would be published in newspapers and reviews with which he

181 ACS, Minculpop Reports, 1922-1944, B. 4, F. 28C, Report #6, Lucien Bellat Speech to Latin-American Press.

182 Ibid., "Memoire succinct sur la situation politique qui se présente actuellement dans le départment d'Oran (Algérie)", Undated.

was in contact. Towards the end of the letter, Bellat declared that "we will not let Mussolini be defeated; he whose name makes the rabble tremble and is synonymous with order and social progress."[183]

Bellat went even further with his admiration for Italy. In a conference for the Rassemblement National, the young deputy asserted that the Italian word Risorgimento should be borrowed by the French for their own purposes. Yet he was not referring to the nineteenth-century Risorgimento of Garibaldi and Cavour, so much as the belief that fascism was the final and greatest stage of a continuing Italian Risorgimento. In this interpretive key, Bellat hoped that a similar effort would revitalize a France weakened by communism and self-doubt.[184]

One of the foremost proponents of Latinity, Raoul Follereau (1903-1977), frequently spoke highly of Fascist Italy in conferences in Algeria. A graduate of the Sorbonne in law and philosophy, the future global champion of the struggle against leprosy had several ties to the far-right, even in his poetic attempts, which led him to meet with D'Annunzio during his honeymoon.[185] As president of the Paris-based Ligue d'Union Latine, Follereau advocated for a type of Latin international that would contest Bolshevism. In his 1936 book, *La Trahison de l'Intelligence*, Follereau catalogued the failures of German and Anglo-American philosophies, and suggested that they not only helped create Bolshevism, but also deprived mankind the tools necessary to combat it. Only

183 Ibid., Paul Bellat to André Joyel Faure, 31 December 1935.

184 *Le Petit Oranais*, 11 December 1936.

185 Domenico Mondrone, "La lotta di Raoul Follereau contro tutte le lebbre del mondo", *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 3063 (1978), pp. 231-233.

a Latin worldview, based on order, hierarchy, and a balance between individual rights and social duties could save the world from the post-war political and economic crisis. This would be accomplished through the application of universal Latin principles in a patriotic International that would contest the Bolsheviks. As Follereau put it, "faced with an international crime, we must repress it with international means."[186]

Though Follereau did not mention Italy explicitly in his book, his Algerian conferences reveal the importance he placed on Fascist Italy in propagating universal Latinity and in opposing Bolshevism internationally. In speeches given in the department of Oran in late 1936, he explained the various stages of Bolshevik expansionism. At first, they had targeted Italy, where "they believed themselves victorious" until the rise of Mussolini. Next was Spain, which had reacted with similar vigor. Now was the turn of France, threatened by the Popular Front. Italy had thus served as the first example of how to fight back, and was thus an inspiration for other Latin nations. A reporter for Oran's most fervently Latinist paper, *Le Petit Oranais*, enthusiastically supported Follereau's interpretation of the global situation, asking "Who better than the [French] Algerians to respond to the needs of this triple alliance [among Spain, Italy, and France]?"[187] In another trip to Algeria in 1938, Follereau railed against the world's Jews, declared that "France for the French" included Spanish Algerians, and ended his speeches by asserting the

186 Raoul Follereau, *Oeuvres Complètes de Raoul Follereau: Tome III-A. Les Livres* (Paris, 2010), pp. 73-156.
187 *Le Petit Oranais*, "Une belle reunion nationale", 7 December 1936.

importance of France in establishing a universal Latin ideal: "Without France, the world would be alone."[188]

Faced with a challenge to the Algerian status-quo, rightist settlers looked to Italy as a model of hierarchical social order. As seen with Tunisian veterans, some argued that France owed Mussolini's Italy a debt for his pro-French interventionist stance in 1914-1915.[189] Furthermore, criticism of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia appeared to implicitly challenge the justification for French colonialism, as articles pleaded for Italy's right as a civilized nation to colonize a "savage" and "uncultivated" land.[190] Even Italian domestic affairs served as inspiration for French-Algerian rightists. Lambert, who visited Italy in 1936, believed the regime had changed the character of Italians for the better and had delivered an effective and comprehensive social welfare system.[191] Journalists who visited Italy, like the future adviser to Salazar in Portugal, Jacques Ploncard d'Assac, praised the modernity of the regime's urban planning and social institutions.[192] Newspaper articles consistently made reference to Italian fascist concepts as ideals to pursue. *Le Petit Oranais* re-printed segments of a work advocating a Latin Front, which suggested that if modern

188 ANOM, GGA, Algérie, 9H/49, F. PPF, N. 275-C, "Rapport Special" 3 March 1938.

189 *L'Echo de Tiaret*, "Ce que la France doit à l'Italie", 2 May 1936.

190 Ibid., "La fin d'un empire", 9 May 1936.

191 *Oran-Matin*, 17 September 1936.

192 Ploncard would remain an important figure for the intellectual French right after the war. With the end of the French empire, and Portugal struggling to maintain Angola and Mozambique, he would remain insistent that neither Europeans nor Africans would benefit from decolonization. Criticizing neo-liberalism for maintaining the exploitation of the formerly "demoplutocratic" colonial powers, Ploncard argued that only new imperial systems built upon corporative principles would bring about a just distribution of tasks and benefits. Ploncard d'Assac, *Manifeste nationaliste* (Paris, 1972), pp. 111-117.

achievements of construction, flying and exploration were to rest on the moral authority of Virgil, Cervantes, and Pascal, "man will dominate machines, without either destroying or worshipping them".[193] Eugène Rethault, an Algerian schoolteacher who became a prominent local political figure, echoed several fascist beliefs in his short book *A la Dérive*. French salvation, Rethault argued, would come through an idealistic and practical youth whose inspiration would be the past and future, and whose incentive would be spiritual rather than profit-based.[194]

While Italy served as an ideological model, the much larger Spanish population in Algeria elevated Nationalist Spain into an equally valued example. Since the final outlines of the new regime had not yet been established, the praise of the nationalists was often vague and mostly orientated towards the defence of civilization. The French Algerian right commonly placed the rebellion in a broader narrative of the resurrection of the Latin model on the international stage. After Mussolini had brought Italy back from the edge of disaster, Franco had begun to rescue Spain at the last moment, while the French Algerians had finally unified in a rejection of the Popular Front. In terms of ideology, the French Algerian rightists assumed that the nationalist movement was a Spanish equivalent of Italian fascism. This view of Spain managed to conflate the different Italian and Spanish nationalist movements into one Latin-based phenomenon that aligned with the views and needs of French Algerian colonists.

193 *Le Petit Oranais*, 7 October 1935.
194 Ibid., 29 April 1937.

Avec l'abbé Lambert à travers l'Espagne Nationaliste, a book by Lambert's secretary Francois Rioland, exemplified the French Algerian right's propagandistic image of Spain. Wherever the nationalists took control, order and prosperity reigned. Rioland extolled public housing for workers, a stabilized cost of living and social programs funded by the wealthy.[195] The ultimate praise of the regime's work was summed up in the declaration that "one must note a general tendency to imitate Italy. What Italy is today, Spain will be tomorrow. Who could complain about that? Not the Spanish people."[196] Not only did Rioland praise the harmonious society established by Franco, but he also warned any Popular Front supporters or sympathizers of the violence they could expect in the future. After showing photos of the naked, tortured and mutilated bodies of Nationalist soldiers and sympathizers, Rioland declared that "The same fate is reserved for us if we cannot unite…"[197] After meeting Franco and speaking of Latin civilization on Queipo de Llano's Radio Sevilla, Lambert returned to Algeria where he recounted his experiences at a large conference. Lambert praised Spain's decision to embrace Italian corporatism, and suggested France must do the same.

Yet for all these efforts, the topic of Latinity increasingly became a point of contention among the coalition of French-Algerian rightists. By 1938, Lambert's dependence on the Parti Populaire Français (PPF), led by the fascist Jacques Doriot, led him to resurrect the Amitiés Latines to maintain a personal following. Though Lambert

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195 François Rioland, *Avec l'abbé Lambert à travers l'Espagne Nationaliste: Reportage Illustré* (Oran, 1938), pp. 94-97.
196 Ibid., p. 135.
197 Ibid., p. 28.

continued to boast of his contacts with nationalist Spanish leaders, the distinguishing feature of the organization was a radical anti-Semitic stance.[198] The PPF General Delegate to Algeria, Victor Arrighi, embittered by Doriot's decision to back Lambert as a candidate for deputy for the 1940 elections instead of himself, hoped to outmanoeuvre his supposed ally. Since anti-Semitism was too strongly embedded in Oran to risk criticizing, Arrighi chose to criticize the concept of Latinity. Both Arrighi and the Oran PPF Secretary Gaston Vidal began to do so after another rightist electoral failure in Oran in 1937. Arrighi contemptuously spoke of Lambert's Latin organizations as nothing but artistic groups where "beautiful women and paintings are shown off", and to which he would never belong, since he considered himself French and not Latin.[199] In a November 1937 meeting in Relizane, Vidal spoke about how his party now opposed the Amitiés Latines on account of its foreign policy.[200] Later, in Mostaganem, Vidal expanded on this criticism, claiming that the theory of Latinity would lead to the French Empire being split up while isolating France from Anglo-Saxon countries.[201] With the continued bickering of rightist parties, the PPF hoped to use such arguments as a tool to bring doctrinal unity. At one point, Victor Arrighi even reprimanded Paul Bellat, urging the supporter of Latinity to call himself French instead of Latin, and to cry "Vive la France" instead of "Vive Franco". The PPF

198 ANOM, GGA, Algérie, 9H/49, F. PPF, N. 4829, Prefect-Oran to Governor-General, 25 April 1938.

199 ANOM, Algérie, Department d'Oran, //84, N. 8949, Chef de la Sûreté Départmentale to Prefect of Oran, 29 October 1937.

200 Ibid., N. 7995, Police Commissioner of Relizane to Sub-Prefect of Mostaganem, 30 November 1937.

201 Ibid., N. 864, Central Commissioner of Mostaganem to Sub-Prefect, 20 January 1938.

also at this time required its members to pick just one party, with some success, as their first day of new recruitments around Sidi-bel-Abbès drew fifty former Unions Latines and Parti Social Français members. [202] By late 1938, Lambert's political fate was largely in the hands of the PPF, as the metropolitan parties had squeezed out the Amitiés Latines.[203]

That is not to say that the PPF rejection of Latinity was wholesale. The basis of the French Algerian settler myth- the creation of a new European race out of Mediterranean migration and the ardors of North African colonization remained. Indeed, in the November 1938 PPF North African Congress held in Algiers, Arrighi continued this discourse in his speech, calling the "Algerian race" an "admirable mixture". In Doriot's speech, the PPF leader proclaimed that the French Algerians were "descendants of a race of pioneers and conquerors" working a land that required strong men and women with a natural inclination to join a "hardy and virile" party like the PPF.[204] By echoing the themes made so common by cultural figures like Bertrand, the PPF could continue to appeal to a regional identity uniquely susceptible to rightist politics. Yet by not mentioning the words Latin or Latinity throughout the Congress, the PPF implicitly rejected the international focus of many of their Oran supporters, even though that department constituted much of their strength in Algeria. By 1938, the needs of organizing an exclusively French-nationalist response to the late 1930s domestic and international political crises had outweighed the vague desire for Latin co-operation. Though Kalman is right to suggest that the PPF had caved in to

202 Ibid., N. Central Commissioner of Sidi-Bel-Abbès, "Rapport", 21 December 1937.
203 Ibid., N. 7008, Head of Special Departmental Police to Prefect of Oran, 8 October 1938.
204 *Le Pionnier*, 24 November 1938.

French-Algerian anti-Semitism,[205] their rejection of a nascent movement for rightist international co-operation in the Mediterranean shows that metropolitan interests were not entirely sacrificed in right-wing French-Algerian politics.

In the end, Spanish and Italian ambitions during World War II thwarted genuine attempts at "Latin" imperial co-operation in North Africa. After the French defeat, the Germans ended up protecting French Tunisia from Italian rapacity, since Hitler understood the danger of weakening the Vichy regime too greatly. Similarly, Hitler rejected Franco's demands for a Spanish entry into the war since they included the possession of French Morocco and the department of Oran in Algeria.[206] Strict nationalism had then trumped efforts by French settlers and idealistic right-wing thinkers to create a Latin union in the Mediterranean.

Conclusion

When dealing with French colonies, the Italian regime had two options. One was to work with the French, and hope to draw out concessions as part of a broader revision of the Mediterranean colonial order.[207] To this end, the rhetoric of Latinity and Eurocentric conceptions of the Mediterranean served as a useful tool to promote cooperation. Even French settlers, wary of pan-Islam, Arab nationalism, Bolshevism, and Parisian meddling in colonial affairs, could be drawn to the possibilities of a Latin alliance based on an authoritarian reassertion of European order and stability. The other option was to fan the

205 Kalman, *French Colonial Fascism: The Extreme Right in Algeria, 1919-1939* (New York, 2013), pp. 137-145.
206 Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism in Spain, 1923-1977* (Madison, 1999), pp. 332-334.
207 Bessis, *La Méditerranée Fasciste*, pp. 89-91.

flames of Arab discontent in order to weaken the French and pry open the door for Italy to make good on its own claims. This was a dangerous strategy, since Italy had its own Arab and Muslim subjects in Libya and East Africa. Furthermore, as we have seen, insofar as rightist conceptions of the Mediterranean transcended nationalism, they did so by creating a kind of super "Latin" nationalism that would theoretically resolve some of the problems raised by the apparent limitations to the nation-state. If it was hard enough to build consensus for a Latin project, how could rightists realistically appeal to Arabs and Muslims? Even some of those given such a task, like the Italian agitator Daniele Occhipinti, working in Tunisia, saw the Arabs as inferior and advocated the creation of a Latin Empire.[208] Yet, as Italian and French interests increasingly diverged in the late 1930s, it became clear to both French and Italian rightists that their imperial dreams rested upon finding a place for Arabs and Muslims. The following chapters will explore how this path, ideologically and practically more difficult, was taken up by the French and Italians, and how Arabs and Muslims responded.

208 Ibid., pp. 209-210.

Chapter Two: Transmitting Italian Fascism in the Mediterranean: Egypt and Tunisia

INTRODUCTION

With the failure of Latin collaboration in the Mediterranean appearing every more probable, Italians began to appeal to Arabs both in North Africa and the Levant. If Italy was to build a Mediterranean empire, it would have to weaken the power of France and Great Britain. The new friend-enemy grouping, which became increasingly clear as Europe hurtled toward war, convinced Italians of the necessity of acquiring Arab allies. On one hand, Arab unrest in places like Palestine could delegitimize British and French rule. On the other, future Italian expansionism would likely entail Italian control over Arab populations, and preliminary steps had to be taken to paint Italy in a positive light. Though Arabs were victims of fascist aggression and threats while simultaneously being subjected to fascist propaganda during this period, they were not passive. This chapter will explore Arab relations to fascism in Egypt and Tunisia, focusing on individual cases of Arabs intrigued by or sympathetic to fascist ideas, institutions, and movements, as well as how Italian communities served as a tool of fascist propaganda.

The field of Arab-fascist relations is a hotly contested one. In a recent collection on the subject, Israel Gershoni has summarized the terms of the debate by outlining a long-standing narrative of sympathy and support for fascism in the Middle East that was unable to fully come to fruition during World War II thanks to Allied military success, but which had extremely troublesome consequences for the post-war Arab world. Recently, thanks to scholars like Gershoni, this narrative has been revised by a series of studies that have

demonstrated the rather limited nature of Arab support for fascism. In the realm of public opinion, anti-fascist voices were more common than those advocating fascist ideas, and those who did flirt with fascism often did so for specific reasons that did not constitute a full acceptance of Nazi or Italian Fascist views.[209]

This chapter, while fully recognizing the limited nature of Arab support for fascism, which is abundantly confirmed, for example, in the Italian Fascists' own interpretations, seeks to further develop the study of those who did take an interest in fascism. This chapter also does not treat those Arabs who found something to admire in, or borrow from fascism as necessarily authoritarian or xenophobic. As will be seen, individuals across the political spectrum had a variety of reasons to examine fascist ideas and practices. And even those who seemed to fully embrace co-operation with fascists still maintained their own specific visions that sometimes clashed with those of their European allies. In order to avoid falling into a resistance/collaboration reduction, this chapter will depart from recent studies that have fruitfully demonstrated the various ways in which Italian fascists sought to gain adherents in the Arab world.[210] Instead, the focus will be placed on local interactions between fascists and a variety of Arab actors.

One way in which to go beyond the reductive question of whether certain Arabs were fascist sympathizers or not is to view their interactions with individual components

209 Israel Gershoni (ed.), *Arab Responses to Fascism and Nazism: Attraction and Repulsion* (Austin, 2014), pp. 1-31.

210 See Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East*; Anna Baldinetti, "Fascist Propaganda in the Maghreb", *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 37, (2011), pp. 408-436; and Williams, *Mussolini's Propaganda Abroad*.

of fascism rather than as a coherent whole, which even historians of fascism have struggled to define. This allows us to separate out the specific elements of fascism that appealed to some Arabs, and examine how these elements could be interpreted and evaluated by non-Italian actors. In the case of an illiberal and authoritarian ideology like fascism, such an approach also converges with Yaseen Noorani's desire to undermine the binary of a liberal and universal Western modernity opposed to a failed non-Western modernity. According to Noorani, the discovery of modern norms in the Middle East that grew out of pre-modern and non-Western societies instead of being imposed or borrowed from Europe can help reveal aspects of European modernity that have been marginalized in order to maintain the liberal and universal ideal.[211] Though Noorani is largely concerned with how an individual ethics of nationalism rose in the Middle East through interior rather than exterior influences, his comment on the underside of European universalism raises interesting questions. While fascism is certainly not a forgotten part of the European experience of modernity, its mere presence as a highly publicized competing alternative to liberalism and socialism offered Arabs a new interlocutor with Western modernity through which local experiences could be re-interpreted. If the Arab construction of a form of national consciousness implied a certain rejection of a blatantly hypocritical European liberalism which, as Abdeslam M. Maghraoui has pointed out, "invalidated the principles it announced"[212], then a movement like fascism could present an intriguing image as a new

211 Yaseen Noorani, *Culture and Hegemony in the Colonial Middle East* (New York, 2010), p. 209.

212 Abdeslam M. Maghraoui, *Liberalism without Democracy: Nationhood and Citizenship in Egypt, 1922-1936* (Durham, 2006), p. 48

type of modernity similar to that undertaken by Arab political and social reformers. The fact that Italy was still a fairly young nation that constantly trumpeted its desire to escape the shackles of liberal Great Britain and France could only add to the feeling of proximity with the Arab situation by those attracted to fascism. Consequently, fascism helped demonstrate that the European norms of liberal democracy were less universal than advertised, and that different forms of modernity in the Middle East could also have an equal claim to validity. Those Arabs who took up an interest in fascism can thus be seen less as blind admirers than as actors attempting to use aspects of a novel European modernity to help justify and bolster their own political and social visions.

Alternatively, fascism could emphasize the exclusivist elements of liberalism. Maghraoui argues that Egyptian liberals borrowed from European thinkers like Gustave Le Bon and Hippolyte Taine in order to demonstrate that the essence of their country was Western, and based on a Pharaonic rather than Islamic past. Such views tended to denigrate the existing traditions and beliefs of the Egyptian population and contributed to the imposition of Western forms of modernity with little popular support.[213] Though fascism did not introduce the idea of a people constituted as a Western-oriented nation, it did re-present them as a norm now stripped of liberal connotations. This explains how fascism was more attractive to a younger nationalist like Ahmad Husayn, and less so to the liberal modernist Taha Husayn.[214]

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213 Ibid., pp. 64-86.

214 For Taha Husayn's views of fascism, see Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Confronting Fascism: Dictatorship versus Democracy in the 1930s* (Stanford, 2010), pp. 135-136.

In order to highlight the variety of ways that fascist ideas circulated in the Mediterranean, this chapter will focus less on the mechanism of propaganda/reception in order to look at more specific, often individual cases of Arab experiences with fascism. Because these experiences varied nationally, this chapter will examine two countries from different vantage points. In the case of Egypt, a rapidly modernizing country with a rich interwar political culture, we will see how the Italian fascist model served as a template for a variety of political actors to examine possible answers to the problems of modernization. And perhaps most importantly, the Egyptians presented here largely sought out information from Italians rather than being exposed to fascist propaganda. This allows us to specify which elements of fascism most intrigued a variety of Egyptians. In Tunisia, where colonial control was tighter than in Egypt, and where Italian expansionism posed a larger threat, fascism was less attractive as a competing form of modern political organization. Yet the large Italian community, in the midst of integration into fascist institutions, brought fascism into everyday affairs between Tunisians and Italians, with mixed results for Italy's aspirations towards Tunisia. The Egyptian and Tunisian experiences with fascism were uniquely important for several reasons. Bordering the Italian colony of Libya to the east and west, Egyptians and Tunisians had the greatest opportunity to follow the events of the brutal Italian occupation of the former Ottoman provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Furthermore, once secured in their new colony, the Italians presented a military menace to both of its new Mediterranean neighbors. And indeed, as early World War II plans drawn up by Italian ministries indicate, the Italian Mediterranean empire would be heavily based on new relationships of authority and power over Egypt and Tunisia. Consequently, these

countries would therefore see some of fascist Italy's most wary detractors, as well as a particularly intense Italian propaganda campaign. These factors combined to make the topic of fascist Italy a commonly debated one amid political circles in both countries.

EGYPT

I. Egypt and the West

Modern Egypt, though geographically a part of North Africa, is culturally and socially closer to the Mashriq than to the Maghreb. Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals, in particular, played a critical role in the Nahda, the Arab revitalization and modernization movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[215] Yet for many decades, particularly in Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt felt the powerful currents of European influence brought by the presence of Greek, Italian, Maltese, French, Russian, and British communities. Ever since the modernization efforts of Muhammad ʿAli in the first half of the nineteenth-century, Europeans had been drawn to Egypt as technical advisers, financiers, merchants, architects, engineers, and small tradesmen. The construction of the Suez Canal from 1859-1869 intensified Egypt's Western connections by drawing in foreign investments and loans while heightening the strategic importance of Egypt to Great Britain.[216] Egyptian ties to Europe continued under the British Protectorate (1882-1922). But the nationalist uprising of 1919,

215 In Egypt, for example, Lebanese owned many newspapers, while important intellectuals representing Islamic reformism (Rashid Rida) and Christian secularism (Farah Antun) came from Syria. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (London, 1962), pp. 200, 227.

216 Arthur Goldschmidt, Jr., *Modern Egypt: The Formation of a Nation-State* (Boulder, 1988), pp. 23-40.

the end of the Protectorate in 1922, and the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 all served as steps toward independence that put Egypt's future relation to Europe in question.

From the perspective of many Egyptian nationalists during the interwar years, Egypt was firmly grounded neither in the Maghreb nor the Mashriq, but in the West. Intellectuals like Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Salama Musa, and Taha Husayn, inspired by the creation of a secular and modernizing Turkish state and the Egyptian Revolution of 1919 that would weaken British rule and establish a liberal constitution, articulated a vision of Egyptian territorial nationalism. By stressing the geographically determined and timeless nature of the Egyptian identity, these intellectuals minimized the importance of Arabs and Islam on their history.[217]

The Egyptian nationalists' decision to distance themselves from the East was a means of justifying an advocacy for European-style modernity. Through a revised historical narrative that situated the birth of Western Civilization in Pharaonic Egypt, these intellectuals could claim that the modern elements they hoped to borrow from Europe were simply a return of what Egypt had created.[218] In his influential book, *The Future of Culture in Egypt* (1936), the liberal thinker Taha Husayn clearly summarized this view in firmly situating Egypt in a Western, Mediterranean world instead of in the Orient, declaring that "our country has always been a part of Europe as far as intellectual and cultural life is

217 Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood* (New York, 1986), pp. 77-142.
218 Ibid., pp. 177-181.

concerned, in all its forms and contents."[219] Afraid that cultural connections with Beirut and Damascus would hold Egypt back, some intellectuals even hoped that Syrian and Lebanese involvement in the Egyptian press would be curtailed.[220] As the 1930s progressed, the unified current of Egyptian nationalism prevalent in the 1920s became increasing fractured, and the notion of a Western-oriented Egyptian civilization saw challenges from Muslim and pan-Arab thinkers that re-asserted the importance of the East.[221] Yet the continued presence of a territorial national identity was enough to shock visiting pan-Arab activists.[222]

The Italians certainly paid attention to the Western-oriented Egyptian nationalists. Though he recognized the pan-Arab and pan-Islamic groups that gravitated towards Cairo, the future Italian Plenipotentiary Minister to Egypt, Roberto Cantalupo, argued that "modern Egypt is too close to the West, too Westernized itself, to be in complete solidarity with all the Islamic forces of the distant and Asiatic East."[223] For the Italian advocate of Eurafrica, Paolo d'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, Egypt was a "filo-European" nation which would play a critical role in the European-led development of Africa. After centuries of being turned towards the Levant under Arab and Ottoman rule, Muhammad ʿAli had swung Egypt decisively towards the West once more, with profound implications for the nation's

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219 Taha Husayn, *The Future of Culture in Egypt* (New York, 1975), p. 9. It is important to note that Husayn distinguished between a Near-East and Far-East. While much of the Near-East was bound to the Mediterranean culturally, the Far-East was largely alien to a country like Egypt.

220 Gershoni and Jankowksi, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs*, p. 128.

221 Ibid., pp. 273-274.

222 Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, 2003), pp. 99-101.

223 Roberto Cantalupo, *L'Italia Musulmana*, 2nd Ed. (Rome, 1929), p. 184.

future.[224] However, whereas Egyptian nationalists stressed that Pharaonic Egypt had helped create the West, Orsini di Camerota maintained that it was Greece and Rome which had brought Egypt out of the East. Similar appraisals dictated Italian plans for Egypt during the heady summer of 1940, when officials believed that victory over Great Britain was imminent. The Ministry of Italian Africa, the Foreign Ministry, and the Army all concocted schemes by which Italy would greatly expand its formal and informal empire. In all of them, Egypt was left an independent state, since officials feared that imposing Italian rule would result in pan-Arab unrest while simultaneously challenging a nation with a "strong spirit of independence". Nonetheless, Italians would seek to exchange Egyptian independence from Great Britain for some form of Italian control over the Sudan, as well as the Suez Canal, as protecting entrances to the Mediterranean had long been a fascist geopolitical goal. During the war, Orsini di Camerota hoped that an Italian-controlled Eastern Mediterranean and East Africa would make it the primary partner in the continuing modernization and Westernization of Egypt.[225]

Italian hopes that Egypt could be firmly brought within their sphere of regional development can be seen in the plans for the cancelled Italian Exhibition to be held in Cairo in 1939. An Italian exhibition in Cairo and Alexandria attended by King Fuʿad had already been held in 1927; along with demonstrating Italian publications on Egypt, it included conferences on syndicalism, fascist culture, and the role of Rome in history.[226] By the late

224 Di Camerota, *Eurafrica*, pp. 44-51.
225 Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle* East, pp. 167-171.
226 Cavarocchi, *Avanguardie*, p. 213.

1930s, a much more ambitious exhibition was envisioned. With the backing of the fine-arts figure Muhammad Mahmud Khalil,[227] the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Cairo and the Italian Legation hoped to succeed where previous exhibitions in Egypt had failed by using a "vivid presentation" to excite the public.[228] Clearly, the Italians hoped to employ the highly-developed exhibition techniques employed by fascists in Italy to impress Egyptians. One of the aims would be to demonstrate that Italy was uniquely suited to aiding the development of Egyptian agriculture and industry, highlighting specifically how the success of Italian heavy industry had not "suffocated and destroyed artisans", the "aristocracy of labor" who manifested the "artistic tradition of the race".[229] Italy would then portray itself to Egyptians as the guiding light of a form of a controlled modernity that limited excesses and respected the past. In short, the exhibition would make the argument of Orsini di Camerota that Italy was the best partner for Egypt in the ongoing process of development and modernization. Though the lack of available funds and political uncertainty scuttled the event,[230] its outlines were indicative of the importance Italians placed on Egypt in their Mediterranean plans, as well as how their connections with figures like Khalil could be potentially leveraged into political propaganda projects.

One reason why Italians saw Egypt as too modern to be brought under direct imperial rule was their desire to congratulate themselves. A substantial Italian community

227 ACS, Minculpop 18/1 bis B. 33, F. 128, SF. Rémond, Georges: Esposizione d'arte Italiana in Egitto nel 1939, Cairo Legation to Minculpop, 17 February 1938.
228 Ibid., "Mostra Italiana del Cairo: 1939, Relazione e Progetto", Undated.
229 Ibid.
230 Ibid., Cairo Legation to Minculpop, 31 March 1938; MAE to Minculpop, 5 April 1938.

had lived in Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, and Suez for many decades, and was given considerable credit by fascists for the modernization of Egypt. Though a few Italians were favored as architects by Egyptian patrons, and occupied key positions in cultural institutions,[231] the majority were poor immigrants from Southern Italy and Sicily seeking higher wages.[232] During the 1930s, the Italian population in Egypt likely hovered around 50,000, the second largest foreign community to the Greeks, who numbered 75,000. A 1930 report indicates that the Italian population in Cairo was between 18,000 and 24,000, with most living in the Bulaq, Shubra, and Ismaʿiliya districts.[233] The fact that few lived in the posh suburbs of Garden City, Zamalek, or Heliopolis indicates that the Italians were more likely to live with Egyptians than the French or British. Indeed, since many Italians in Cairo took on jobs as machinists in small-workshops, they formed a strong presence in the industrial-commercial center of Bulaq. Some even remained into the post-war years.[234] Another 25,000 lived in Alexandria, often in poorer quarters like ʿAṭṭarin and Labban.[235] Although Italians had initially taken key positions in sanitary and postal institutions, by the interwar years they had long been relegated to manual labor and clerical work. More wealthy elites could be found in the Greek than in the Italian community.[236] As recent work

231 Michael Haag states that Italians, "more than any other community were the architects and engineers of modern Alexandria", *Alexandria: City of Memory* (New Haven, 2004), p. 134.
232 Francesca Fauri, "Italians in Africa (1870s-1914), or How to Escape Poverty and Become a Landowner", *The International History Review*, Vol. 37, 2 (2015), pp. 324-334.
233 ASMAE, Rapp. Egitto, B. 243, F. Scuole 3, Rapporto 3931/374, 12 June 1930.
234 Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* (Princeton, 1973), pp. 91, 115, 199.
235 Robert Ilbert, *Alexandrie, 1830-1930, Histoire d'une communauté citadine, Tome 1* (Cairo, 1996), p. 398.
236 Haag, *Alexandria*, pp. 134-135.

on Egypt's foreign communities has shown, class was a more important determinant to population distribution than nationality. The majority of residents in the wealthier "European" quarters were Egyptian.[237] As such, Italians were more likely to live beside poorer Egyptians and Greeks, though individual streets tended to be dominated by one group.[238]

Given the poverty and diversity of the Italian population in Egypt, which included 5000 Greeks, 5000 Eritreans, and 5000 Levantine Jews,[239] creating a fascist community was no easy task. The fascio organizations in Cairo and Alexandria saw frequent infighting and transgressions of Italian consular authority during the 1920s.[240] And while many Italians in Egypt had demonstrated strong patriotic sentiments before the rise of fascism, authorities feared that increasing numbers of youth would be drawn away from an Italian identity. Since Italian children were more likely to find opportunities through French schools, consulates and local fascists began an effort at "rounding-up" (rastrellamento) Italian school-children to ensure the maintenance of an Italian national identity. The same drawbacks to Italian schooling also meant wealthier Egyptians preferred to send their sons and daughters to French schools.[241] Even when Italian schools mostly targeted Egyptians,

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237 James Moore, "Making Cairo modern? Innovation, urban form and the development of suburbia, c. 1880-1922", *Urban History*, 41, 1 (2014), pp. 102-104.

238 Ilbert, *Alexandrie*, pp. 405-406.

239 Ibid., Tome II, pp. 616-617.

240 ASMAE, Rapp. Dipl. Egitto- Many of the folders regarding the Egyptian fascio during the 1920s are more concerned with these organizational squabbles and accusations than the tasks of organizing the Italian community.

241 ASMAE, Rapp. Dipl. Egitto, B. 243, F. Scuole-3, Consulate-Alexandria to MAE, N. 2320-297, 19 April 1930.

as in Catholic-run schools in Upper Egypt, they faced competition from French and American competitors. Those Egyptians that did attend Italian schools tended to be less well-off.[242] Perhaps this was reflected in the popular quarter of Bulaq in Cairo, where Egyptian youth ranged from a quarter to a fifth of all students between 1931 and 1933 in the main Italian elementary school.[243] Even if Italians struggled to attract Egyptian students, their shift to a more nationalist education did not preclude the continuing presence of locals.

Fascist youth organizations like the Balilla and Avanguardisti also targeted Italian students. As early as 1931, the Cairo fascio could claim to have signed up 1278 Italians to these organizations. The poverty of Egypt's Italians deepened the community's embrace of fascist authorities who not only delivered subsidies, but also provided opportunities for their children to take advantage of group tours in Egypt and trips to Italy.[244] Egyptians and other foreign communities living in proximity to Italians then had a more intimate experience with fascist institutions than offered by newspapers and newsreels. At times, Italian youth from Italy came to visit the famous sites of Egypt while showcasing a revitalized Italian nation. In 1931, for example, six hundred Avanguardisti visited the

242 Marta Petricioli, "Italian Schools in Egypt", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 24, 2 (1997), p. 183.

243 ASMAE, Rapp. Dipl. Egitto, B. 265, F. Rapporto sul Rastrellamento, Consulate-Cairo to MAE, N. 10844, 23 February 1932; B. 276, F. Rastrellamento, Consulate-Cairo to MAE, N. 84891, 7 December 1933.

244 Ibid., F. Fascio Cairo, Giuseppe del Sarto to Consul-Cairo, "Relazione trimestrale, Ottobre-Dicembre 1931", 31 December 1931; Haag, *Alexandria*, pp. 134-135. Even the smaller community in Port-Said sent 100 Avanguardisti to Italy in 1932, MAE, Rapp. Dipl. Egitto, B. 265, F. Fascio Port-Said, Consul-Port-Said to MAE, N. 2360, 3 August 1932.

citadel, Muhammad ʿAli mosque, and pyramids of Giza in Cairo before returning to Alexandria where they paraded through the streets. Cantalupo reported that their behavior impressed Italians and Egyptians alike.[245]

II. Egyptians in Contact with Fascism

Given the size of the Italian population in Egypt, its proximity to Egyptians, and its adoption of fascist institutions by the start of the 1930s, it is not surprising that fascist ideas circulated among Egyptian nationalists and political activists. In the nineteenth-century, Italy had overcome its own foreign occupiers to unify and assert itself as a European power. As a Mediterranean country with a long history, the re-establishment of Italian dignity clearly offered a hope to Egyptian nationalists. Now their fascist government promised to carry on the Risorgimento ideal of creating Italian subjects to match the unified state. This project could now even be seen outside of Italy, on the streets of Cairo and Alexandria. While James Moore has rightfully argued that the growing interwar nationalism of foreign communities in interwar Egypt must shoulder some blame for the decline of Egyptian cosmopolitanism,[246] it also offered an at times paradoxical opportunity for borrowing and appropriation. Even if Egyptians often looked at Italian nationalism with a critical and concerned eye, it still offered both a normative model for their claims to modernity, as well as ideas for how to mobilize national identity and resources through state organizations.

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245 Ibid., F. Crociera Opera Nazionale Balilla, Legation to MAE, N. 2998, 16 September 1931.
246 James Moore, "Between Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism: The Strange Death of Liberal Alexandria", *Journal of Urban History*, 38, 5 (2012), pp. 892-897.

Wilson Chacko Jacob has demonstrated the importance of sports, masculinity, and physical culture to Egyptians in search of a modern subjectivity capable of resisting colonialism and asserting Egyptian independence.[247] The Egyptian nationalists' concern with the body then opened an opportunity for fascists to advertise their own efforts at national regeneration. At times, fascist organizations participated alongside other local groups. For instance, when a sports organization run by Princes ʿUmar Ṭusun and ʿAbbas Ḥilmi held a series of competitions in 1929 with French, Armenian, Greek, Italian, and Egyptian athletes, Italians won 12 of the 17 events. The consulate of Alexandria was excited that they had given such a good account of themselves, especially since their organization had recently been incorporated into the fascist Dopolavoro recreational institution.[248] In 1934, the Port-Said fascist youth were finally invited to join Maltese, Greek, and Egyptian Boy-Scout groups for an annual gathering to salute Prince Farouk.[249] Yet it was not in the realm of sport that fascism drew the most youth interest, but rather in more political organizations.

Though it was recognized by many Egyptians as a geopolitical threat, Italian Fascism also offered a potential set of ideas, practices, and institutions for Egyptian political activists looking for new political forms in a period of apparent deadlock among the nationalist Wafd party, the conservative monarchy, and the British. Immediately upon

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247 Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (Durham, 2011), pp. 44-124.

248 ASMAE, Rapp. Dipl. Egitto, B. 232, F. Untitled, Consulate-Alexandria to MAE, N. 3558-470, 31 May 1929.

249 ASMAE, Rapp. Dipl. Egitto, B. 283, F. Fascio Anno 1934, Consulate-Port-Said to Legation-Cairo, N. 675-14, 13 February 1934.

the founding of a student-led Wafdist paramilitary group, called the Blue Shirts, feelers were sent out to Italy. In January 1936, an ex-deputy and president of Alexandria's Wafdist youth organization, Mamduḥ Riaz, asked the Italian Legation for publications on the technical aspects of fascist youth organizations and the Dopolavoro.[250] Seeing an opportunity to find potentially pro-Italian voices in a country upset by Italian aggression in Ethiopia, the Italians sent Riaz one book on youth education and eight defending Italian actions in East Africa.[251] The case highlights the Italian clumsiness in dealing with potentially friendly Egyptians: one can imagine Riaz' surprise when he received a probably unwanted stack of literature on Ethiopia when his concern was purely with social organizations. Yet the episode reveals the desire of a younger generation of Egyptian political actors to study the institutions of the Italian regime. Similarly, a young student largely responsible for the organization of Cairo's Blue Shirts, Muhammad Bilal, openly admitted he had followed the Italian model.[252]

The Blue Shirts' interest in fascist youth groups went beyond mere technical matters for some. An Egyptian literature student writing in the Wafdist paper *al-Jihad* placed the Blue Shirts in a universal trend that had originated in the Italy of Garibaldi and Mazzini and found its fruition in the Black Shirts. According to the author, the Black Shirts

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250 ACS, MINCULPOP, DGDP (1930-1943) 18/7, B. 62 Egitto 1936-1938. F. 1936, SF. Camicie azzurre wafdiste, Cairo Legation to Stampa e Propaganda, "Camicie Azzurre Wafdiste. Richiesta materiale propaganda sul fascismo", 24 January 1936.

251 ACS, MINCULPOP, DGDP (1930-1943) 18/7, B. 62 Egitto 1936-1938. F. 1936, SF. Camicie azzurre wafdiste, DGDP to Cairo Legation, 2 Feb. 1936. The eight books on Ethiopia came in a mixture of Arabic, English, and French.

252 James P. Jankowski, "The Egyptian Blue Shirts and the Egyptian Wafd, 1935-1938", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 6 (January 1970), p. 87.

had "a social role, as the defenders of public morality and of virtues", while inculcating a national spirit in Italians. After listing other countries where similar organizations were taking root, the student concluded, "One can foresee that we will be like Italy and Germany shortly. As in these two countries, the institution of colored shirts will assure Egypt the future of which it is worthy."[253] If as Gilbert Achcar notes, fascism had some admirers among the Egyptian middle-classes, it was because it offered a model of action for supposedly oppressed peoples. Still under British military occupation and sympathetic to the struggles of Palestinians,[254] Egyptians could see something in the Italian response to their own "mutilated victory" of World War I. Squadrismo culture, which operated as a sacred act of national salvation in the minds of dedicated Italian fascists,[255] could then appeal to the colonized seeking their own independence and experience of national and personal regeneration. Ironically, this would go against Italian interests, who would prefer an Egyptian government amenable to heavy Italian influence. Yet, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch writes, the enthusiasm for renewal generated by a "culture of defeat" tends to manifest itself as a universal model to be copied by others.[256] This contradiction can be seen in the actions of Italians in Egypt, who were happy to share information about the Black Shirts, yet privately expressed criticisms of the Egyptian youth squads.

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253 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 18, F. Stampa, R. Legazione d'Italia in Egitto to MAE, N. 3728/1494, "Le camicie colorate in Egitto ed il movimento fascista", 23 October 1936.

254 Gilbert Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (New York, 2009), pp. 79-80.

255 Gentile, *Il culto del littorio*, pp. 44-46; Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, pp. 214-215.

256 Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*, trans. Jefferson Chase (New York, 2003), pp. 29-32.

It is also important to note that the Italian example was not one that was only followed from a distance. Thanks to the efforts to fascistize Egypt's Italians, many urban Egyptians would have had some firsthand contact with fascist demonstrations of power and youthful energy. The newspaper *Kawkab al-Sharq* expressed one possible reaction to such experiences when writing that "the citizens of Cairo, with their sincere admiration for the new generation placed in the Wafd's youth organizations, almost seem to get revenge on prior governments that impeded the creation of such groups, forcing the Egyptians to watch with jealous eyes the fascist Italians that traversed with great pride the streets of Egyptian cities, without the Egyptian youth being able to imitate them."[257] With the arrival of the Blue Shirts, Egyptians could now express their nationality through the public displays of order and discipline introduced in Egypt by the Italian immigrant community.

Yet despite the claims of some Blue Shirts that they were following in the footsteps of fascists, the Italians were not fooled, and correctly interpreted why the movement came about and what its limitations were. As James Jankowksi has shown, the Wafd assented to the creation of the Blue Shirts so as not to avoid losing the increasingly radicalized youth to groups like Ahmad Husayn's Young Egypt, while also channeling the political energy of the late 1935 protests against the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty.[258] As a result, a tense relationship existed between the moderate Wafd leaders and its more radical Blue Shirt members who pushed for more forceful public political action. Ten months after the

257 ASMAE, Egitto, B.16, F. Partito nazionalista Egiziano, R. Legazione to MAE, N. 3134/1205, "Camicie azzurre wafdiste", 17 September 1936.
258 Jankowski, "The Egyptian Blue Shirts", pp. 81-82.

founding of the organization, the Italian Legate noted that the "Wafd will have to remedy this centrifugal tendency if it does not want to see a force that it has nourished rise up against it." Though the Legate thought that the Blue Shirts could play a disruptive role, he also believed they were still quite distant from Italian squadrismo, as well as other similar European movements.[259]

The paternity of the blue shirts idea was contested however. The President of the Egyptian Nationalist Party, Hafiz Ramaḍan Bey, took credit for the idea, stating that his Nationalist Youth Association had been wearing blue shirts since 1932. Though Ramaḍan Bey's Blue Shirts remained separate, the Italians believed he was pleased with the Wafd's gamble, since the youth would soon be disillusioned with the moderate Wafdists and move to his own youth movement, which had been espousing a radical interpretation of youth politics all along.[260] According to a 1934 report by the Italian Legate, Ramaḍan Bey's group was openly modeled after fascist organizations and included 1500 students and recent graduates. Though he kept them from playing an open political role, which surely allowed the Wafd to later appropriate the use of the blue shirts, the Nationalist Party leader used this group to experiment with fascist ideas. Ramaḍan and some of his followers had studied a wide variety of material sent from Italy on corporate institutions, with the hopes of "adapting fascist corporatism to local conditions and applying them gradually in

259 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 16, F. Partito Nazionale Egiziano, R. Legazione d'Italia in Egitto to MAE, N. 3694/1475, "Camicie azzurre wafdiste", 23 October 1936.
260 Ibid., R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 187/82 "Camicie azzurre wafdiste", 12 January 1936.

agricultural centers to demolish the Wafd party."[261] In a letter to Mussolini asking for his word that Italy had no claims on Egypt, Ramaḍan expressed his desire that "Egyptian fascism will be able to follow in the glorious path of its elder sibling, Fascist Italy."[262] However, despite Ramaḍan Bey's attempts to ingratiate himself with the Italians, they were skeptical. The Legate described Ramaḍan Bey as "a man of superior quality, but a theorist and intellectual without people by his side capable of complementing those qualities". And after a long meeting with the Nationalist leader, the Legate decided that "the affinities and sympathies of the nationalist party for fascism do not seem very solid, or at least are limited to its spiritual leader, who otherwise does not appear to have the energetic and dynamic personality needed to create a party of notable importance in the life of the country."[263]

Associated with Ramaḍan Bey's Nationalist Party was a more radical, intransigent movement, Young Egypt, founded in October 1933 by Ahmad Husayn. Young Egypt's paramilitary youth organization, the Green Shirts, employed the same fascist style and language as the other youth groups, but with a similarly radical party leading it. Gershoni and Jankowski, working from British documents, recognize that Young Egypt had some contacts with Italy, and possibly received Italian money to subsidize their newspapers as

261 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 10, F. Situazione politica in Egitto: Rapporti anglo-egiziani, R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 939/354, "Organizzazioni giovanili nazionaliste egiziane (camicie azzurre e camicie verdi)", 17 March 1934.
262 ASMAE, Egitto B. 16, F. Pretesa propaganda italiana in Egitto, Telegramma N. 265, "Messaggio di Hafez Ramadan a S.E. Il Capo del Governo (Camicie Azzurre), 18 January 1936.
263 ASMAE, Egitto B. 14, F. Partito Nazionalista Egiziano/Camicie Azzurre, R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 2473/809, "Partito Nazionalista Egiziano", 2 September 1935.

well as a trip Husayn took to Italy.[264] The Italian documents give us a more extensive picture of the relationship between the two sides.

The Italians were rightfully circumspect with a party that advocated a xenophobic platform that could harm the interests of Egypt's Italian population. Furthermore, open Italian support for a party with little chance of taking power could needlessly harm Italian relations with Great Britain and the Wafdists. When Young Egypt sent out feelers to the Italian Legation in September 1935 regarding support for an anti-British position, the Italians balked: "...what they would like from us is to tangibly contribute to favoring a greater activity of the Association, which would end in a violent anti-British campaign with inevitable British reactions. For now, it does not appear to me that the local situation allows us to pass from vague commitments, which I have not failed to give, to concrete agreements."[265] As such, it was Young Egypt that at times looked to Italy for assistance, and not only as a potential ally against the British. Husayn also wanted to study fascist institutions.

II. Institutional Borrowings

As Egyptian politicians and officials gained more freedom from British control, it became easier to shape policies and institutions. Other nations undergoing similar

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[264] Gershoni and Jankowski, *Confronting Fascism*, pp. 239-240.

[265] ASMAE, Egitto, B. 15, F. Associazione "Giovane Egitto", R. Legazione to MAE, N. 2976/989, "Associazione "Giovane Egitto", 30 September 1935. This cautious Italian position allowed Italy to plausibly deny the claims of the Wafdist Prime Minister Nahas Pasha that Young Egypt was acting on behalf of foreign powers (implying Italy) and receive a promise from the Egyptian Foreign Minister that the government would refrain from such accusations in the future. ASMAE, Egitto, B. 15, F. Associazione "Giovane Egitto", MAE, DGAP to S.E. Il Ministro, 27 June 1936.

modernization efforts, like Turkey and Iran, provided potential models to follow. At times, Italy was counted among these countries, as fascist initiatives aimed at tying the nation together through economic programs and infrastructural development were highlighted to the international press. The subject of institutional borrowing helps us to escape the overly simplistic labelling of Egyptians as fascists or anti-fascists. As we will see, Egyptians from many political backgrounds at times believed they could extract useful lessons from Italy. In her study of Meiji-era Japan, D. Eleanor Westney has argued that institutional borrowing is not a matter of clever copying, or dictated by a "rational shopping" model. Instead, she proposes that institutional borrowing can be complex-sometimes limited by accessibility of information and influenced by new trends-as well as subject to significant alterations upon adoption.[266] While Great Britain, France, and Germany would remain obvious influences on government institutions and reforms, and Turkey offered a blueprint of how to secularize an Islamic country, Italy could be attractive to those interested in a more interventionist state with nationalist instead of socialist tendencies.

Despite Italian hesitations to aid Young Egypt, Ahmad Husayn hoped to learn from the Italian example. Undeterred by a disappointing trip in Italy in 1934,[267] Husayn decided to send a 28-year-old Ministry of Finance functionary, Abdul Daiem Abul Ata, to Italy to learn firsthand about fascist institutions in the summer of 1936. An Italian Interior Ministry document allows us to track Ata's time in Italy. After attaining a leave from his ministry

266 D. Eleanor Westney, *Imitation and Innovation: The Transfer of Western Organizational Patterns in Meiji Japan* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 4-8, 18-24.

267 Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust*, p. 79; Gershoni and Jankowski, *Confronting Egypt*, p. 242.

to learn Italian, Ata received permission from Italian hierarchs to register for the University for Foreigners in Perugia, whose courses he attended "occasionally" in July 1936. He did, however, forge relations with local fascist figures, and "interested himself especially in Syndical and Corporative structures." Ata even made inquiries into the possible purchase of explosives and other weapons for Young Egypt. Such nefarious concerns, whether they were suggested by Husayn or not, made Ata nervous about his mission. When *Il Giornale d'Italia* ran a picture of Ata with local fascist hierarchs on a trip to visit Spoleto's Dopolavoro section, he worried that it might be noticed in Egypt. Yet the Italians did not see a circumspect political agent, but a "megalomaniac who is mentally wound up and disordered".[268] This judgement was perhaps vindicated upon Ata's return to Egypt, where his open bragging about Italian contacts forced the Egyptian Finance Ministry to move him from Cairo to the provinces.[269]

Between July and August 1938, Husayn spent two weeks in Italy as part of a tour of Europe, including Great Britain, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. For this tour, Husayn received much more support from the Italians, possibly thanks to telling the Italian Legate that the name Young Egypt was inspired by Giuseppe Mazzini's Young Italy, and that Mussolini was the "maestro" of the era.[270] Accompanied by Dr. Selim Cattan, who worked in the Italian Foreign Propaganda service, and with a car at his disposal, Husayn

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268 ASMAE, Egitto B. 16, F. Associazione "Giovane Egitto", MAE to R. Legazione d'Italia, N. 323452/23, "Abdel Diaem di Abul Ata e di Cassau", 17 September 1936.

269 Ibid., R. Legazione d'Italia to R. Ministro Stampa e Propaganda, N. 3717/1486, "Abdul Daiem Abul Ata", 23 October 1936.

270 ACS, MINCULPOP DGSP (1930-1943) 18/7, B. 63: Egitto 1938 F. 1938, SF. Viaggio Italia di Ahmed Hussein, R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, "Avv. Ahmed Hussein", 20 May 1938.

extensively toured all the spaces in which Fascist Italy projected its societal vision to both Italians and foreigners. The Ministry of Popular Culture reported that in Rome, Husayn visited the Royal Academy, the University City (La Sapienza), Cinecittà, the Forlanini Institute, the National Dopolavoro Exhibition, the Augustan Exhibition of Romanità, the Ministry of Aeronautics, the National Institute for Maternity and Child-Care, the seaside summer camp at Ostia, and the Stadium of Marble Statues/Fascist Academy of Physical Education. Husayn then joined Abul Ata, who had returned to Italy to study at La Sapienza, for tours of the industrial centers of Terni, Turin, and Genoa.[271] Husayn came back from this trip quite impressed with the Italian (and German) models, and praised the dictatorships for their efficient rule and for placing their people before capitalist interests.[272] The grand-tour of Italian institutions and set-piece projects likely made an impression on Husayn.

Less radical Egyptian administrators and politicians also took interest in various Italian institutions and projects. As early as 1927, the liberal journal *al-Siyasa al-Usbuʿiyya* ran an article extolling the recent fascist legislation on maternal and infant care. The journalist, Ṭaha Fawzi had been ordered to investigate the matter by the former Wafdist politician,[273] Dr. Hafiz Afifi Bey, who hoped to pass similar legislation. Fawzi, a trusted friend to the Italians who had been recommended for Italian knighthood, had been given

271 Ibid., MINCULPOP to MAE, "Viaggio in Italia del Capo della Camicie Verdi Egiziane", 26 August 1938.

272 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Confronting Fascism*, pp. 250-251.

273 W.J. Berridge, "Imperialist and Nationalist Voices in the Struggle for Egyptian Independence", *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, 42, 3 (2014), p. 427.

all the materials necessary to assist Afifi.[274] The mid-1930s saw more frequent studies of Italian institutions and reforms. In late 1936, the Cairo Legate bragged that a Wafd proposal for a new propaganda ministry was largely inspired by the Italian model. An unnamed member of the Wafd government, "inspired by philo-Italian feelings and an admirer of fascism", had asked the Legate for details on the Italian ministry. Furthermore, Dr. Ahmed Farid al-Rafai claimed that in examining the press offices of 25 nations, he had taken particular note of the Italian model, along with those of Germany, Bulgaria, and Turkey.[275]

Government officials also held conferences focusing on fascist programs. In June 1935, Fuʿad Abaza Bey, the director of Egypt's Royal Society of Agriculture, presented a report on the highly-touted Italian "bonifica" project to a "numerous audience consisting mostly of experts on agricultural questions" after a tour of Italy.[276] Fu'ad Abaza was born in 1890 to a family of influential landowners, and by the 1930s, was an internationally recognized expert on Egyptian agriculture.[277] During the interwar years, Egyptian agriculture was in something of a crisis. The pre-war move to intensified cultivation had wrought changes to soil and water tables that required capital investments and loans from

274 ASMAE, Rapp. Dipl. Egitto, B. 217, F. Fascismo 1927, Legation to MAE, N. 5426/503, 28 July 1927.
275 ACS, MINCULPOP, DGDP)1930-1943), 18/7, B. 62 Egitto 1936-1938, F. 1936, SF. Creazione ministero stampa e propaganda in Egitto, Cairo Legation to MAE, "Eventuale creazione di un nuovo ministero egiziano della stampa e propaganda", 19 November 1936.
276 ASMAE, Egitto B. 15, F. Miscellanea, R. Legazione d'Italia to R. MAE, N. 1459/439, "Conferenza sulla bonifica integrale in Italia", 7 June 1935.
277 David E. Mills, *Dividing the Nile: Egypt's Economic Nationalists in the Sudan, 1918-56* (Cairo and New York, 2014), p. 78.

the state.[278] With small farmers struggling and state intervention needed, Italy, engaged in its "battle of grain" to salvage its agricultural sector and discourage urbanization, was a clear model. The Italian agricultural projects, particularly in the swampy Agro-Pontina outside of Rome, were presented as experiments in totalitarian fascist planning that would create ideal fascist citizens. It is no wonder they impressed Abaza, who "conceptualized rural reform as a total social plan that would encompass the improvement of peasant housing, health reform, education reform, and the raising of the social and economic standard of living of the peasantry."[279] Indeed, the director was intimately involved in the creation of three model farming villages in the mid-1930s. Visiting the Italian planned agricultural centers like Sabaudia therefore presented Abaza with an invaluable point of reference to his own efforts. In his conference report, soon published in Arabic, and complete with photos offered by the Italian Ministry of Propaganda, Abaza demonstrated the success of fascist propagandists in portraying their agricultural reforms as a universal model. Abaza Bey was particularly impressed by Mussolini's ability to inject new pride into the rural lifestyle, arguing that in order to attract more Italians to the countryside, Mussolini

> toured Italy from north to south carrying out in front of the peasants [fellaheen] the hardest agricultural tasks of plowing, sowing, and managing a variety of agricultural machinery; thereby encouraging people to love agriculture…while increasing the number of those willing to farm. And this is the greatest and noblest

278 Alan Richards, "Agricultural Technology and Rural Social Classes in Egypt, 1920-1939" in Elie Kedouri and Sylvia G. Haim (eds.), *Modern Egypt: Studies in Politics and Society* (London, 1980), pp. 56-79.

279 Omnia el-Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (Stanford, 2007), pp. 125-126.

> occupation in our time in which industry has swept away the old guilds and brought people to love the luxurious urban life.

Aside from an appreciation of the re-valorization of the countryside as opposed to the city, Abaza also asserted the need for a strong and active state, bewailing the lack of necessary resources in Egypt. In contrast, Abaza, speaking of the Agro-Pontina land reclamation, approved of "the amount of speed in the execution of great projects, which shows the importance of the state in various reforms."[280] For Abaza, beyond the technical achievements of Italy lay a regime which understood the importance of rural values and could support them through decisive action.

A visit to the Pontine marsh project also impressed the Wafdist Minister of Agriculture, who told the *Egyptian Gazette* that he intended to send a team of experts to Italy to study the program more closely.[281] Despite this interest, technocratic interest in Italian rural planning was not indicative of Egyptian fascism, but of the possible uses of Italian means to solve Egypt's agricultural problems. Furthermore, Italy was not alone in trying to protect the rural economy through state intervention and the valorization of a simple, traditional lifestyle. Even the New Deal experimented with such programs. Egyptian technocrats thus participated in an international push to "restore the balance and harmony between nature and the economy, and between technology and culture".[282] This,

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280 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 15, F. Miscellanea, *Iṣlāḥ al-arāḍī al-būr fī īṭāliyā.*

281 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 18, F. Stampa, R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 3672/1461, "Dichiarazioni del Ministro Egiziano dell'Agricultura sulla bonifica integrale Italiana-Progettata missione Agricola egiziana in Italia", 22 October 1936.

282 Schivelbusch, *Three New Deals: Reflections on Roosevelt's America, Mussolini's Italy, and Hitler's Germany, 1933-1939* (New York, 2006), pp. 104-137, 142-153.

and not abstract authoritarianism or fascism, made the Pontine marshes so intriguing to Egyptian agricultural experts.

Other conferences were focused more on fascist propaganda than on studying Italy as an exemplar of modernity. A member of the Egyptian Royal Academy staying in Rome told minister of Press and Propaganda Galeazzo Ciano that an "Egyptian political figure in a high position" had requested materials to hold a conference on the origins of fascism, its party organization, and its corporatist system. Though Ciano promptly sent seventeen publications, it is unclear if the conference was held.[283] Nonetheless, the desire of Egyptian figures to hold conferences on Italian institutions and policies speaks to the success of the mid-1930s Italian effort to present their "revolution" as containing universal values. Yet the primary appeal of Italy stemmed from the image of the authoritarian state as a force for institutional modernization. Therefore, the interest of Egyptian administrators should be seen in light of A. James Gregor's interpretation of Fascist Italy as a "developmental dictatorship", since their focus was less on the ideological nature of the regime than on its institutional methods of rapidly building a cohesive and modern nation.[284] Politicians and administrators like Dr. Hafiz Affi Bey and Fuʿad Abaza can hardly be considered fascists for taking an interest in particular programs of state-intervention and social-welfare; these were cases of institutional borrowing facilitated by both the fascist desire to propagate their

283 ACS, MINCULPOP, DGDP (1930-1943) 18/7, B. 61 Egitto 1933-1935, F. 1935, SF. Académie Royale Egyptienne, 21 December 1935, 26 December 1935.
284 A. James Gregor, *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship* (New Jersey, 1979).

ideas and the status of Italy as a developing nation more akin to Turkey and Egypt than to Great Britain or France.

Yet in other instances, administrators went beyond merely citing Italy as a model, and served as useful propagandists for Italy. The Young Egypt admirer of Italy, Abul Ata, compared the march on Rome to the hegira in a 1935 conference for The Association of Egyptian Government Functionaries.[285] Abbas al-Sayed Husayn was another Egyptian who returned from Italy with a proselytizing zeal. An inspector in the Ministry of Education, Husayn sought Italian backing for a conference which would "highlight the gigantic fascist bonifica works" he had seen while touring Italy. Husayn hoped the Ministry of Popular Culture could send him a film to complement his presentation, which was duly sent, with English subtitles. Two years later, Husayn again asked for support. A journal he ran for teachers and students, which the Italian Legate estimated printed 6,000 copies, needed color photos for a series of articles on Italian cities, which would show Egyptian students the "artistic beauties, economic activities, and achievements of Fascism." Husayn was even willing to let the Italians write the articles themselves. Given his prior connections to Italy and the potential influence of his journal, the Ministry of Popular Culture sent Husayn his requested sets of photos along with articles on various Italian cities. [286]

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285 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 15, F. Miscellanea, MAE to Ministero delle Colonie, N 224380, "Abdel Daiem Abul Ata= Conferenza", 22 July 1935.

286 ACS, Minculpop, DGSP (1930-1943) 18/7, B. 63 Egitto 1938- Alessandria, Porto Said, Cairo, 1940-1943, F. 1938, SF. Cairo: Pratiche Varie, SSF. Abbas el-Sayed Hussein, Gabinetto Minculpop to DGSP, 8 April 1938., R. Legazione d'Italia to MINCULPOP, "Abbas S. Hussein", 16 March 1940., Minculpop DG Turismo to DGSP, 16 April 1940.

IV. Seeking Help from Italians: Students and Journalists

Radical political movements and administrators looking for foreign models were not alone in seeking out information and advice from the Italians. Individuals also approached the Italians with proposals. In the midst of the Ethiopian War, Ibrahim Hamdy, a 50-year-old engineer educated in England, and working at the Ports and Lighthouses Administration, sent a proposal written in English to the Italian Ministry of Propaganda. Declaring himself an admirer of Mussolini, and vouched for by two Italians, Hamdy proposed that the Italians help him set up a secret Italian Propaganda Office in Egypt under the cover of a name such as "The International Travelling Bureau". The success of such a project would be ensured by Hamdy's connections "with all the educated classes in Egypt, especially the Government employees and the students" and his "trusted agents in the different ministries and schools who will always talk for Italy." Finally, the office could sponsor student exchanges to promote closer relations between Italian and Egyptian youth. Though the Alexandria Consulate reported that Hamdy was morally blameless and pro-Italian, the Cairo Legation advised the Ministry of Press and Propaganda that his proposal could not be taken into serious consideration.[287]

The Italian rejection of Hamdy did not mean they were unwilling to let Egyptians speak on their behalf. In late 1937, Sobhi Wiheda, an Egyptian student studying law in Rome, wrote "Thought of a Leader", a collection of writings by Mussolini translated into Arabic. The book was published in Egypt with the Italian Legation pleased by its

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287 ACS, Minculpop, DGSP (1930-1943) 18/7 B. B, 62 Egitto 1936-1938 F. 1936 SF. Propaganda Italiana in Egitto, Letter from Ibrahim Hamdy to Ministry of Press and Propaganda, 28 February 1936, R. Legazione d'Italia to Ministry of Press and Propaganda, 20 April 1936.

successful reception. Wiheda also wrote an article for *Il Popolo d'Italia*, entitled "Italy and the Islamic Orient", in which the student asserted that Fascist Italy, thanks to "its reinstatement of spiritual values, which are declining in so much of Europe" was uniquely positioned to understand the "Orient". For Wiheda, the values that Egypt could learn from Italy would merely be the return of what originated in the East: "The conception of a man of state as a reformer of peoples, educator of spirits, and father of his generation, is a typically Oriental conception that will return to triumph in the Islamic Orient when its people will have attained their full national consciousness and understood the spiritually noble value of their mission".[288] Wiheda thus proved adept at employing a fascist language, while subverting the Italian claims that only their civilizational history could provide a framework for a new collaborative structure between East and West. Whereas many political modernizers sought to identify Egypt with Europe, Wiheda asserted the primacy of authentically Oriental values that had moved to Italy and would now return to their birthplace.

Curious students provided a potentially fruitful means of propagating fascist ideas and perspectives among educated Egyptian classes. In 1937, a group of six French educated students from a variety of disciplines asked the Alexandrian consul to pay for a trip to Italy to "see Roman antiquities, to closely observe modern Italian civilization, and to meanwhile

288 ASMAE, Egitto B. 20, F. Stampa, R. Legazione d'Italia to Minculpop, N. 4356/1586, "Sobhi Wiheda-"Pensiero di un Capo", 26 November 1937. Press summary of his article is attached to document.

initiate ourselves in its beneficial discipline",[289] while another four, inspired by Italian propaganda directed at "Oriental students", asked to finish their degrees in Italy.[290] One Egyptian Christian applying to attend Rome's Military Academy, sent a personal letter to Mussolini in which he praised the Italian leader for standing up to communism and to a coalition of nations during the Ethiopian War. Insisting upon his fascist beliefs, the student continued, "my country is in the grip of so many misfortunes and can only liberate itself by means of fascism, which can give it strength and glory. As a result, I live for fascism…[and] serve God, my country, and fascism with total sincerity."[291]

In other cases, fascist officials took a more active stance with regard to Egyptian students. When a group of engineering students toured Italy in the summer of 1938, the Fascist University Groups (GUF) tasked with hosting them were told of the importance of the visit for propaganda purposes.[292] Upon the arrival of the students in Brindisi, the GUF, along with a representative from the Propaganda Ministry did not disappoint, leading the Egyptian students to pay homage at the Monument for the Fallen and at the National Monument for the Italian Sailor, before going to see Roman monuments, fascist public works, and a Naval College.[293] In fact, before this trip, the Italian Legate had already

289 ASMAE, Egitto B. 24, F. Miscellanea, R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 1522/615, "Facilitazioni a studenti Egiziani", 30 April 1937.
290 Ibid., MAE, N. 225656/1356, "Appunto per la D.I.E.", 27 July 1937.
291 Ibid., R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 1085/450, "Elias Makhar en Naggiar", 26 March 1937.
292 ACS, Minculpop, DGSP (1930-1943) 18/7, B. 63 Egitto 1938, F. 1938, SF. Viaggio in Italia di Studenti Universitari Egiziani, Minculpop to Secretary of G.U.F., "Viaggio studenti egiziani facoltà ingegneria", 21 July 1938.
293 *Il Giornale d'Italia*, 24 July 1938.

proposed to the Ministries of Propaganda and Foreign Affairs that between 500 and 800 Egyptian students from the University of Cairo be encouraged to visit Italy with discounted ticket prices on ships. Though such plans were shot down by objections from the shipping companies that generally aided state institutions in such projects, the Italians were diligent enough to see that there were students among the Egyptian educated elite that were interested in Italian institutions, and that visits could be invaluable propaganda tools. However, between budgetary constraints and the breakout of war in 1940, there was not enough time or resources to experiment with this means of mutually desired interaction.

While the Italians were clearly happy to exploit Egyptian students for propaganda purposes, it was necessary to maintain control over the political nature of their presence in Italy. Even a message sent by Italian students in Rome to students of Egypt was discouraged by Italian officials for possible unwanted political ramifications.[294] The most prominent example of the Italian use and control of Eastern students was the Congress of Oriental Students held in Bologna from May 3-5 1936, which was attended by one hundred and thirteen Arab, Armenian, Chinese, Indian, Iranian, and Eastern Jewish students. Arabs formed the largest component, with thirty-six in attendance, including six Egyptians.

The Congress displayed the ways in which Italian authorities sought to appeal to foreign youth through a universal vision of fascism. This meant walking a fine-line between asserting Italian superiority and appearing open to other cultures. The opening

294 MAE, Egitto, B. 15, F. Scuole e Studenti, MAE to R. Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale, N. 245715/472, "Appello di studenti universitari italiani agli studenti egiziani", 19 December 1935. The content of the Italian students' letter is not included, so it is unclear why the message concerned Italian officials.

address by the Orientalist scholar, Carlo Formichi, stated that Italy was historically and geographically destined to bridge East and West, Asia and Europe. Furthermore, he declared that distinguishing races according to odious and unjust suppositions of inferiority and superiority were foreign to the universal nature of Italian psychology. After defending the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, Formichi concluded by encouraging harmony between East and West. The Congress then commemorated the centennial of the birth of the Indian mystic Ramakrishna before a moment of silence for the recently deceased Egyptian King Fuʿad.

Yet for all these appeals to the sensibilities of the students, the aim was to position Italy as the decisive center of East-West relations. A report for Mussolini declared that the Congress was important for completly banning all foreign languages, for "clearly and spiritually inserting" students from so many backgrounds into the life of the regime by allowing them to "participate in fascist manifestations on the same footing and with equal enthusiasm to their Italian comrades, and for the students' recognition that Italy and its Duce would create "a new order in the world" as well as fulfill its "millenary task of mediating between the universal ideals of East and West." In line with typical regime claims, Fascist Italy was not to be part of a global project of nationalist regeneration, but its epicenter.

But what were the reactions of the students themselves? Unfortunately, we have to remain within the perspective of fascist officials, but even so we can get a glimpse of the voluntary nature of the students' pro-fascist position. The students gave their own presentations on a variety of topics, from the aspirations of Syrian students to the Iranian

perspectives on Roman civilization, to the fascist tendencies of Egypt. It is possible that the students viewed the Congress as an opportunity to ingratiate themselves with the regime in order to strengthen their country's cause with high-ranking Italian figures. This was clearly evident in the conflict between the Arab and Jewish students at the Congress, since the former denied that the latter were representatives of Palestine. Undoubtedly, tensions were exacerbated by the initial events of the Arab Revolt in Palestine. The authorities initially sided with the Arab students, hoping to feign ignorance of the addresses of interested Jewish students, but had to relent for fear of creating a backlash in the "Jewish world". In order to avoid any embarrassing incidents during the Congress, the parties agreed to name members to a committee that would study the Palestinian question and submit a proposal at the next Congress. Furthermore, the Arab and Jewish students were allowed to review each other's speeches.

The Italians recognized the desire of the students to have their voices heard despite the restrictions: "The fact that we exerted editorial control does not take away anything from the freedom [spontaneità] of the oriental youth, who approved the texts submitted to them with irrepressible acclamations, and whose enthusiasm it was actually necessary to contain, at least in appearances, within the limits of an exquisitely cultural event, to avoid political stumbling blocks that would have created repercussions abroad." Such enthusiasm led the author to tell Mussolini, rather optimistically, that the Confederation of Oriental Students "represented a political tool of the first order, capable of reaffirming throughout

the whole oriental world our truths."[295] If the Confederation was an effective tool, it was not one that the Italians were willing to risk wielding again, as the expected future Congresses were not held. And yet it was not for lack of student willingness, as the Ministry of Education reported receiving repeated requests from students throughout Europe about the next Congress.[296]

Students were not alone in their willingness to approach Italian authorities. Journalists did so as well. Observers at the time understood that the Italians subsidized some papers in exchange for the printing of propaganda pieces. But it is important to recall that these contacts were often initiated by the journalists, whose motives ran from sincere admiration to the short-term need for subsidies. For example, Ismail Taher, an Egyptian journalist for the moderate liberal-constitutionalist paper *al-Siyassa*, wrote a series of articles praising Italy after a trip to Libya and Italy. He then proposed to the Italian Legation that he could publish a book using the articles and additional photos. The Italians would subsidize the effort by buying 500 copies out of a suggested printing run of 2000. Though it is not clear if Taher's plan went through, the Legation was in favor, given the lack of material in Arabic at the time on Italy.[297] The fact that Taher had gone to such lengths without any Italian support suggests that his was a case of a sincere admirer.

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295 Two documents provide the basis for this discussion of the Bologna Congress: ASMAE, Affari Politici R.G., B. 52, F. Congresso degli studenti orientale a Bologna, N. 172/17, "Relazione riassuntiva sul Congresso degli Studenti Orientali a Bologna", 9 May 1936, and "Appunto per Sua Eccellenza il Ministro", 6 May 1936.

296 ASMAE, Affari Politici,R.G., B. 63, F. Propaganda Culturale, MAE to Ministero Educazione Nazionale, N. 242813, "Congresso di Studenti Orientali", 8 December 1937.

297 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 18, F. Stampa, R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 3937/1592, "Giornalista egiziano Ismail Taher=Pubblicazione sull'Italia", 6 November 1937.

Similarly, a long-term relationship existed between Karim Thabit, an editor for the influential paper, *al-Muqaṭṭam*, and the Italians. It began in 1929 when an interview with Mussolini impressed the Egyptian journalist. [298] Two years later, the Italians gladly accepted Thabit's proposal to write a book on the Italian dictator. The Legate, Roberto Cantalupo, noted that Thabit was dedicated to Italy and would use approved Italian books to construct his narrative. For the Italians, Thabit's offer was a blessing: by subsidizing the print runs, the Italians would have an effective piece of propaganda written in Arabic, and by an Arab. Finally, Cantalupo believed that the focus on Mussolini as "the protagonist of our present historical moment [would] fully respond to the oriental mentality."[299] Thabit would return to Italy in 1933, where he interviewed several hierarchs and toured the new model city of Littoria.[300] And when Thabit became the co-founder of the pro-Wafdist paper *al-Miṣri* in 1936,[301] he continued to vouch for Italy, arguing that the Wafdist Blue Shirt threat was exaggerated, since the Italian Black Shirts had shown they were a force for order and stability rather than anarchy.[302] Meanwhile, the Italians provided him with a 50 Egyptian lira monthly subsidy.[303] Finally, as a show of their faith in the pro-Italian reporter,

298 ASMAE, Rapp. Dipl. Egitto, B. 232, F. Untitled, R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 1937/740, 27 June 1929.

299 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 2, F. Giornali e Giornalisti, R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 507/163, "Pubblicazione in arabo sul Duce", 13 February 1931.

300 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 8, F. Stampa, R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 2753/808, "Interviste in Italia del giornalista egiziano Kareem Tabet", 4 August 1933.

301 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Confronting Fascism*, pp. 57-58.

302 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 16, F. Partito Nazionalista Egiziano, R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 3775/1514, "Camicie azzurre wafdiste", 28 October 1936.

303 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 23, F. Stampa, R. Legazione d'Italia to Ministero per la Stampa e Propaganda, N. 35 "Accordi con giornali locali", 23 April 1937.

Thabit scored another interview with Mussolini, who confirmed Italy's peaceful intentions regarding Egypt while affirming Islam's role as a bulwark against communism.[304]

Another pro-Italian journalist, Jallal al-Awf, suffered for his faith in Italy. As the director of the Jaffa newspaper *al-Jamaʿa al-Islamiyya*, Awf hoped to gain Italian support for his anti-British stance during the Arab revolt in Palestine. Awf was a member of the group of journalists following Mussolini's procession through Libya in March 1937, and was impressed by his trip to Libya and Italy, where he visited factories, cultural centers, and made contacts with Italian orientalists.[305] Upon returning to Jaffa, Awf even sought to begin experimenting with fascist institutions by creating an unemployment office.[306] Facing increasing pressure from British authorities for his pro-Italian and anti-British stance, Awf also suggested to the Italians that he could create a new Telegraph Agency and Egyptian daily paper in order to facilitate Italian propaganda while continuing to criticize Great Britain. Though the Ministry of Propaganda believed the idea too ambitious and naïve, since its backers were too well-known as pro-Italian to maintain a mask of objectivity,[307] the Consul in Jerusalem, Serafino Mazzolini, hoped to continue supporting

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304 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 19, F. Rapporti Politici, SF. Intervista Abul Fath-Kerim Tabet, R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 3846/1382, "Intervista di S.E. il Capo del Governo al Sig. Kerim Tabet, condirettore del "Misri"", 24 October 1937.

305 ASMAE, B. 23, F. Stampa, SF. Giornalista arabo Gialal Auf, Ministero Stampa e Propaganda to R. Consolato Generale-Gerusalemme, N. 3727, "Giornalista Gialal Auf", 19 April 1937.

306 ASMAE, B. 23, F. Stampa, SF. Giornalista arabo Gialal Auf, Consolato-Gerusalemme to Stampa e Propaganda, B. 2045, "Signor Gialal Auf", 10 May 1937.

307 Ibid., Ministero Stampa e Propaganda to R. Legazione-Cairo, N. 3403, "Agenzia informazioni e grande organo di stampa araba al Cairo per la tutela degli interessi italiani in Egitto- Proposte del Signor Gialal Auf", 4 April 1937.

Awf even after the British expelled him from Palestine in June 1937. The cause of the expulsion was two articles run in Awf's paper, that attacked Britain and compared its Islamic policies unfavorably with those of Italy.[308] Mazzolini hoped that during the suspension of Awf's paper, the Italians could provide a subsidy to repay the journal for having provided the Italians with 7000 anti-Italian pamphlets that were promptly burned.[309] Yet during his exile in Damascus, it appears that Awf did not receive support. A stream of letters sent to Awf's Italian contacts demonstrated his flagging faith in Italy as an ally in his struggle against the British.[310]

Other journalists however, were seen by the Italians as pens for hire. In the case of Antun Yacoub, a Copt of Syrian origin writing for various Egyptian papers, the Italians discovered the danger of cutting off a supply of money. During the Ethiopian War, the Italians decided to forego the services of Yacoub for a plethora of reasons: they suspected him of feeding information from the Italian Legation to Egyptian police, and they believed he was too unreliable in his reporting and pro-Italian in reputation to convince many readers.[311] Yacoub quickly responded, asserting his loyaly by collecting his pro-Italian articles and completing a translation of Mussolini's "My Life" from an English version. Yet when the Legation denied futher assistance, Yacoub resorted to a direct appeal to

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308 Ibid., Consolato-Gerusalemme to MAE, N. 2402/660, "Sospensione del giornale arabo di Giaffa "Giamiah al-Islamiah", 31 May 1937.

309 Ibid., R. Consolato-Gerusalemme to MAE, N. 7586, "Giornalista Gialal Off", June 17 1937.

310 Ibid., Letters translated from Arabic by Instituto superior orientale di Napoli, beginning with letter dated March 12 1938.

311 ASMAE, B. 23, F. Stampa, SF. Antun Yacoub, R. Legazione d'Italia to MAE, N. 3817/1538, "Giornalista egiziano Antun Yacoub", 30 October 1937.

Mussolini, citing his contacts with several fascist leaders, and his long-running work for Italy which began with the defense of its highly unpopular war against ʿUmar al-Mukhtar in Cyrenaica.[312] Since the Italian Legation felt that Yacoub was no longer valuable, and was essentially using the Ethiopian War as an excuse to extract more in subsidies, his appeals were in vain. As a result, Yacoub set to work writing anti-fascist pamphlets for Spanish Republican groups. Due to Italian prodding, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry agreed to seize Yacoub's pamphlets.[313] The whole affair demonstrated the unstable nature of outsourced propaganda works: the operative would probably be in financial difficulties and potentially unreliable if not ideologically committed.

So far, this chapter has focused on Arabs and Muslims looking to Fascist Italy for answers to a variety of questions posed by the mid-1930s crisis of Egypt's social, political, and economic foundations. This led to a wide range of interest in the Italian model for social organization, technocratic planning, and political institutions. As we have seen, the Italians were keen on exploiting this curiosity to burnish their own image among the rising Egyptian middle-classes, while trying to avoid alienating any of the competing political movements. While this framework highlights the Egyptian desire to learn from Italy, it has largely ignored an important mechanism in the transfer of fascist ideas and practices from one side of the Mediterranean to the other: the role of local Italian communities. With that in mind, we will explore the case of Tunisia, where the predominance of Italians among

312 Ibid., Ministero per la Stampa e la Propaganda, Traduzione dall'arabo per il Ministero degli Affari Esteri, B. 1016, 16 September 1936.
313 Ibid., R. Legazione d'Italia in Egitto to MAE, N. 3282/1191, "Propaganda spagnuola antifascista", 11 September 1937.

the European population demonstrates the quotidian exchanges by which fascism as an opportunity and threat were experienced by Italians and Tunisians.

TUNISIA

While the Italians hoped to bring Egypt into its sphere of influence, Tunisia was a long-term goal for colonial expansion, and possibly even direct-rule. Just as fascists hoped to redeem Italian honor in Ethiopia after the disastrous defeat in Adowa in 1896, so too did they hope to avenge the French establishment of a protectorate in Tunisia in 1881. Before the French decision, Italians who fervently advocated a colonial vocation for their young nation had their eyes set on Tunisia. Not only did the probably underestimated 1881 census count of eleven thousand Italians significantly outnumber the few hundred French, but history and geography were supposedly on Italy's side as well. Tunisia had been a Roman granary, and according to one geographer, a former piece of the Italian land-mass that a volcanic eruption had jettisoned. Public opinion had been so upset at the French that the Tunisian episode helped push Italy into the arms of the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary.[314]

In the forty years between the French conquest of Tunisia and the rise of fascism, the local Italian population expanded greatly, reaching 85,000 to 130,000, depending on whether one trusts French or Italian estimates. Despite periodic French attempts to limit Italian influence, the demand for labor on docks, mines, and railway construction required ever-greater numbers of Italian immigrants who came from impoverished areas in Sicily,

314 Gilles Pécout, *Il lungo Risorgimento: La nascita dell'Italia contemporanea (1770-1922)* (Milan, 2011), pp. 324-325; Rainero, *La Rivendicazione*, pp. 23-30.

Naples, and Sardinia.[315] As Julia A. Clancy Smith has pointed out, for those in search of work, travelling to Tunisia could be easier than moving across Sicily.[316] These working-class Italians, often speaking a Sicilian dialect mixed with Arabic words as a result of their frequent contact with Tunisians, joined a middle-class community with a longer history. Italian Sephardic Jews who had come to Tunisia from Livorno had long played an important role in the regency of Tunisia as bankers, professionals, and merchants. Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, other Tuscans joined the Jewish community and took on jobs as doctors, architects, engineers, and lawyers.[317]

Fearful of a possible faltering of Italian influence in Tunisia through French naturalization, fascists systematically took control over the diverse community with the goal of consolidating national sentiments. As Mary Dewhurst Lewis has argued, French sovereignty in Tunisia was never unquestioned. Instead, it had to pay a certain respect for the legal formalism of the Beylical state while also compromising with the extra-territorial sovereignty that Great Britain and Italy enjoyed over their nationals residing in the protectorate.[318] The weak French position allowed the Italians to create something of a state within a state. The Livorno Jewish and Tuscan middle-class community that exercised leadership over the Italian community were targeted by fascists as liberal free-masons and systematically replaced in key posts. Meanwhile, all civic associations were integrated into

315 El Houssi, "Italians in Tunisia", pp. 167-170, 173.
316 Julia A. Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, C. 1800-1900* (Berkeley, 2011), pp. 80-84.
317 El Houssi, "Italians in Tunisia", pp. 165-169.
318 Dewhurst Lewis, *Divided Rule*.

fascist organizations. As Rainero points out, the fascist program meant that the former clientele of the Italian elites now ran through fascist officials, who held access to work, credit, admission to schools and hospitals, and to the Italian government through the consulate.[319]

Although increasingly occupied with resisting anarchist and communist activists among the Italian working-classes during the 1930s, as well as the resurgence of middle-class liberal anti-fascism, fascists made efforts to use their institutions and the Italian population's proximity to Tunisians to convince the latter that French rule was unjust, and that Italians truly had the interests of Tunisians at heart. As seen in Chapter One, the increasing unlikelihood of fruitful collaboration with the French, even under the guise of Latinity, intensified the drive to win the hearts and minds of Tunisians. During the interwar years, daily contacts between Italians and Tunisians could become instances of Italian propaganda, as well as of the Tunisian reception and rejection of fascist entreaties. Studying these interactions in light of the Italian efforts to lay the foundations for eventual rule over Tunisia helps us understand the modes and limitations of spreading fascism beyond an Italian audience.

The Italians faced a challenge in gaining Tunisian friends. As the 1930s progressed, Tunisian political activists and their growing number of supporters steadily hardened their opposition to French rule and began to advocate for independence. A conjunction of events eroded the French position: climactic conditions devastated crop yields from 1930-1932,

319 Rainero, *La rivendicazione,* pp. 151-154.

while the world crisis pushed down prices for Tunisia's central exports of wheat, wine, phosphates, and iron. Urban artisans had few customers given the depressed wages, and struggled to compete against French products. Meanwhile, the cadres of educated Tunisians were systematically denied administrative positions in a bloated bureaucracy dominated by the French.[320] In this context, the liberal-constitutional party, the Destour, founded in 1920, fractured as younger Tunisians demanded more radical action. The Destour's leaders had been more concerned with pan-Arabism and pan-Islam, and often came from religious, agricultural, and commercial backgrounds. A younger generation, which largely drew its leaders from professional classes with more pro-Western views, founded the Neo-Destour with the goal of mobilizing the Tunisian population through mass-politics to achieve independence.[321]

The leader of the Neo-Destour, Habib Bourguiba, upon returning to the political scene in May 1936 after two years of detention, hoped to work with the leftist Popular Front government. In a speech delivered in Paris to a collection of important Popular Front figures, Bourguiba noted the danger of both French and Italian fascist propaganda. According to Bourguiba, the lack of French funding for the education of Tunisians gave Italians an opportunity to provide free schooling and even trips to Italy. The Neo-Destour leader believed that "the Tunisian people distrust Italian colonization, in so far as it presents

320 Ali Mahjoubi, *Les origines du movement national en Tunisie, 1904-1934* (Tunis, 1982), pp. 540-591.

321 Mustapha Kraiem, *Pouvoir Colonial et Mouvement National: La Tunisie des années trente: Crise et Renouveau* (Tunis, 1990), pp. 152-195; Jean-François Martin, *Histoire de la Tunisie Contemporaine: De Ferry à Bourguiba, 1881-1956* (Paris, 2003), pp. 167-175.

a real danger to them from a demographic point of view." Yet, he warned the audience that only substantial reforms from the Popular Front could remove the threat, stating that "with the procrastination and hesitation of the Popular Front government, fascist propaganda, whether French or international, waits for the exasperation of the masses to throw the Tunisian people towards a solution of despair."[322] As hopes for reforms diminished, the Neo-Destour began to clash with the Popular Front, and public disorder and violence in 1938 brought recriminations from the left that Bourguiba and company were acting as agents of fascist Italy to the detriment of a democratic France. While Italians sometimes received discrete promises of friendship and sympathy from Destour and Neo-Destour members, the official line of these parties remained quite critical of both fascism as a regime and its colonial rule in Libya and East Africa.[323] The Italians were not fools, and understood that Tunisian nationalists wished to use the threat of Italy to put pressure on France. But Bourguiba feared that in a desperate enough situation, Italy could rely on positive local relations to foster just enough support to replace the French.

Given the neo-Destour's position regarding Italy, as well as its popularity, fascists had precious little wiggle room to find potential collaborators for such a project. One potential target was Chedly Khairallah, a veteran Destour activist and journalist who the Neo-Destour deemed too moderate for a leadership position.[324] As a largely independent

322 Centre de Documentation Nationale, *Le Néo-Destour et le Front Populaire en France, I. Le Dialogue-1936-1938* (Tunis, 1969), pp. 244-250.

323 Bessis, *Méditerranée fasciste*, pp. 217-239.

324 Martin, *Tunisie Contemporaine*, p. 174. Peyrouton believed that he had used Khairallah as a tool leading up to the suppression of the Neo-Destour in 1935, and that the unfortunate journalist had been labelled a traitor by other Tunisian nationalists, Bessis, *Méditerranée fasciste*, p. 160.

actor, Khairallah appears to have entertained the notion of an alliance with the far-right. After being exiled to Italy as part of Governor-General Peyrouton's crackdown on the Neo-Destour leadership in 1935, Khairallah collected publications on fascism while living in Rome.[325] Upon returning to Tunisia in 1937, Khairallah argued in his paper, *La Voix du Tunisien*, that France was returning to Catholic traditions of faith, order, and harmony. As Europe, "chewed up by materialism and divided by greed" continued to struggle, a united Islamic world would offer it a means of regeneration. Mussolini, by claiming to be a friend of Islam, had recognized as much, and other Europeans would likely follow in order to gain such strong allies. France would have to adopt more generous policies towards its own Muslims if it wished to compete.[326] Khairallah was then trying to gain leverage over the French by appealing to the worldview of the far-right. This unusual strategy did not preclude openings to Italy. Khairallah also penned articles describing the various youth institutions in Italy, while unfavorably comparing French reforms in North Africa to Italian actions in Libya and in defense of Egypt at the 1937 Montreux Conference.[327] The Italian consulate believed that Khairallah was slowly becoming sympathetic to the fascist regime while seeking to work with French nationalist parties to negotiate reforms to the

325 ACS, ASD Serie Affari Politici, Tunisia B. 5 Tunisia 1934-1935, F. Rapporti Politici 1935, MAE to Consulate-Tunis, "Kairallah, Chadly", 3 September 1935.

326 ASMAE, Tunisia B. 8, *La Voix du Tunisien*, "Les futures relations franco-islamiques", 18 July 1937.

327 Ibid., *La Voix du Tunisien*, "Politique Musulmane realiste", "Le Nationalisme Tripolitain", 13 April 1937, "La Formation Populaire en Pays Fasciste I, II, II, III", 20 May, 25 May, 4 June 1937. Khairallah, while using Italy as an example to spur the French to action, recognized that Libyans had not assimilated and its real nationalists were planning independence in exile.

Protectorate.[328] Meanwhile, French intelligence believed that Khairallah, under the influence of the far-right, had become anti-communist, and wished to dissociate North African nationalist movements from any ideological alliance with the left.[329] Despite his flirtation with fascism, Khairallah did not proceed much further: he strongly condemned the Italian claims on Tunisia made in November 1938, and declared that, given the nature of fascist rule, France was certainly the lesser of two evils for Tunisians.[330] The fact that a political actor with few solid foundations maintained so many reservations regarding fascism indicates the low probability that an Italian substitution for French rule would generate any enthusiastic support.

At first, the Italians, recognizing the inherent difficulties, made few efforts to woo Tunisians. In a December 1930 report for the Tunis consulate, Ilio Tonci cited a Destour activist who explained how his comrades mistrusted Italy, while suggesting that the Italians could at least publish pro-Italian materials in Arabic to get their viewpoint across. Tonci then suggested various ways in which the Italians could ingratiate themselves with Tunisians.[331] However, a response by Foreign Minister Dino Grandi signaled Italian hesitancy to commit seriously to political machinations with Tunisians. There were several reasons for Grandi's position. Firstly, Italy was carrying out an intensified version of the

328 Ibid., Consulate-Tunis to Minculpop, N. 15362-2829, 17 June 1937.

329 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Oran 5I/55, F. Tunisie N. 782/K, S.E.A. "Renseignement-Publications Tunisiennes", 7 April 1937.

330 Bessis, Méditerranée fasciste, p. 247; AN-Peyrefitte, Microfiche F/60/745, *Tunis-Soir*, "Autour des revendications italiennes", 21 December 1938.

331 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 1, F. Situazione Interna, Ilio Tonci to General Consulate-Tunis, "La Situazione in Tunisia: Relazione al Console Generale di S.M.", 10 December 1930.

French colonial program for Tunisia in Libya, and could hardly project itself as an alternative. Furthermore, the application of fascist "rigid discipline" to the Libyans would not be well-received by Tunisians accustomed to the liberties of the press and of political organizations. Aside from the fact that the French often restricted these liberties whenever the colonial order was threatened, Grandi believed that the Tunisian elites had firmly adopted French liberal values and would not look fondly on those of fascist Italy. In terms of a friend-enemy distinction then, Tunisian political activists had been lost to liberalism. Finally, even if Italy were to support the position of Tunisian nationalists in order to weaken the French, unrest in Tunisia could have serious ramifications in Libya. As a result, Grandi approved of the small measures Tonci had in mind to encourage Tunisian-Italian relations, but discouraged any ambitious programs.[332]

Despite these concerns, as the 1930s progressed, the Italians became increasingly interested in preaching the benefits of fascism and the new model of colonialism on display in Libya. In sparsely populated Southern Tunisia, individual Italians brought the message of fascism. An Italian military intelligence report shines light on the techniques employed by such agents. In the case of Rene Saada, born in Gabès, Tunisia, and a "devoted Italian and enthusiast of Mussolini and fascism", we can see the workings of a consular agent who received little recognition from Italian authorities. Saada, who spoke Arabic, travelled around Southern Tunisia countering anti-Italian propaganda and portraying Mussolini as a strong-man who had brought stability, peace, and justice to Italy. According to the report,

332 Ibid., MAE to General Consulate-Tunis, "Spirito Pubblico Arabo in Tunisia", 5 February 1931.

"many natives showed up at the Consulate to see the large portrait of Mussolini and they have seriously labelled him 'Lion-Face'." When two shaykhs in Gabès questioned Italian propaganda, Saada personally drove them in his car to Tripoli, where their discussions with Libyans assuaged prior concerns. Afterwards, the impressed shaykhs spread their positive view of Italian Libya to other Tunisians. The author of the report expressed remorse that the consular authorities did little to encourage agents like Saada.[333] But if Italian efforts along the southern Tunisian-Libyan border were weak, the same could not be said for the more populated regions of Tunisia, where a concerted effort was made in the 1930s to convince Tunisians of the benefits of fascism and Italian, rather than French rule.

One of the primary areas of ideological contact between Italians and Tunisians was in the very institutions of Italian nationalization/fascistization. The network of Italian associations, mostly based on schools and cultural/recreational centers offered a place for interested Tunisians to learn about Italy, or at times, to confront Italian arrogance. The Dante Alighieri Society, which was dedicated to propagating Italian culture through conferences, exhibitions, and classes, was one such place. Though the society predated fascism, it had been co-opted by the regime, and largely served the political interests of the regime. In 1936, the French noted that an increasing number of non-Italians had begun attending the society's events, including several Tunisians, who were given "special consideration".[334] The French Director of Public Instruction even believed the French

333 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 5, F. Rapporti Politici 1935, Ufficio Servizio Informazioni Militari, "Il nazionalismo in Tunisia nei confronti della Tripolitania", 3 July 1935.

334 CAD-N, 1 TU/1/5/60, D. 22-1, "L'Activité Italienne en Tunisie après les Accords de Rome", March 1936.

should establish a competing institution, partly because it was "raising the prestige of the Italians in the eyes of foreigners, and notably of Muslims".[335] By 1939, the Tunis Alighieri society had begun to make connections with radical Tunisian youth. In May, 39 out of 42 Tunisian students passed an examination in Italian after taking free classes that often ended with talks on the history of Rome and the leaders of Italy. Two Neo-Destour activists, one kicked out of the elite Sadiki secondary-school, the other soon to be arrested, had advised the others to take the courses. To commemorate their participation, the students received propaganda works and an Arabic translation of *The Divine Comedy,* and had their picture taken with the Italian consul.[336]

Even primary schools served an ideological purpose, as Bourguiba had warned. A French intelligence report from 1932 noted that Tunisian children going to Italian schools helped to spread pro-Italian propaganda after receiving special treatment: "They [the Tunisian students] pride themselves on being well-treated by their teachers and are quite satisfied with the education they received. The Italian leaders, to gain the sympathy and good graces of the indigène masses, chose among the best students those who are sent to Italy for summer camps at the Government's expense."[337] The following year, Italian authorities discussed the potential pitfalls of increasing requests by Tunisians to send their children to Italian schools. Accepting a large number of Tunisians would alert the French

335 CAD-N, 1 Tu/1/V/2133 2M: 528, Directeur Général de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts to R.G., "Note pour un projet de propagande française", undated.
336 CAD-N, 1TU/1/V/2136 (1), S.P. to R.G., N. 2232-6, 24 May 1939, and S.P. to R.G., N. 2.891-6, 28 June 1939.
337 CAD-N, 1TU/1/V/2133 2M:528, Commissaire Divisionnaire to S.P., N. 144-6, "Propagande italienne", 11 July 1932.

to possible Italian propaganda, and also raise questions in the Italian settler community who were sometimes told that the Italian schools did not have enough room for their children. Despite these concerns, the Italians agreed that a slight increase in the number of Tunisian students would be beneficial, both as sources of information on Tunisian opinions, and as potential propagandists for fascist Italy; a role that would have to be carefully obscured from French officials.[338]

Yet the proximity of fascist social institutions also presented occasions for conflict. In the spring of 1939, as fears of a future Italian occupation hung over Tunisia, the Dopolavoro seems to have stoked resentments. In al-Funduq al-Jadid, Italians exiting a Dopolavoro room began a discussion about a speech by Mussolini they had just heard. When the local Tunisians began to praise France and attack Italy, the Italians retreated to their houses, whose windows were soon broken by rocks.[339] A few weeks later, after a few Italians exited a Dopolavoro center in Soliman, a conversation ensued between the Italians and four Tunisians. When asked why they were so happy, an Italian replied that it was because they had just gained Albania, and would soon conquer Tunisia. A fight soon broke out between the groups.[340] Though these were relatively minor incidents, they demonstrate how tense relations between Italians and Tunisians could become. And surely enough, the

338 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 4, F. Scuole italiane in Tunisia, Bombieri to Parini, 12 May 1933; Parini to Guarnaschelli, 27 May 1933; Buti to Parini, 3 June 1933; Parini to Bombieri, 17 July 1933.

339 CAD-N, 1TU/1/V/2137, S.P. to R.G., N. 1390, 29 March 1939.

340 Ibid., N. 3412, "Rapport du gendarme Couvreur sur un incident", 14 April 1939.

French noted that Italians were ordered soon after to stop wearing Dopolavoro badges in public in order to avoid such occurrences.[341]

For the Italians, tension on the streets could undo years of efforts to ingratiate themselves with Tunisians. Since many Italians in Tunisia were employed in small trades and in agriculture, there were ample opportunities to make contacts with Tunisians in an intimate way. The Italian consulate in turn sought to leverage these contacts into propaganda opportunities. The case of Giuseppe Barecca is instructive. Born in 1903 in New Orleans, Barecca left Chicago for Tunisia in 1921, where he began a taxi company with three cars, and learned Arabic. While dealing with customers, Barecca spoke in Arabic of Italy's beneficent rule in Libya, encouraged Tunisians to send their children to Italian schools, and distributed pro-Italian brochures.[342] Similarly, the Consulate also distributed its propaganda through a local grocer, Calogero Sferlazzo.[343] The French sûreté even worried that the beach of Tunis' banlieu served as a site for the rapprochement of fascist and Tunisian youth.[344] One French report suggested that the focus on Arabic in Italian schools allowed Italian youth to effectively communicate fascist principles of authority and action to Tunisian youth, and that the French would have to start learning Arabic to compete.[345] Even during World War II, when the French were generally confident in the

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341 Ibid., S.P. to R.G., N. 1.710-6, 20 April 1939.

342 Ibid., Direction de la Sûreté, N. 3435-6, "Propagande italienne", 1 September 1937.

343 CAD-N, 1TU/1/V/2133 2M:528, Chef de poste de police to Chef de la securité générale, N. 921, "Propagande italienne", 2 June 1936.

344 CAD-N, 1TU/1/V/2137, Direction de la sûreté publique, N. 3338-6, "Propogande italienne", 23 August 1937.

345 AN-P, Microfiche F 60/745, Untitled report, 30 October 1937.

Tunisians' contempt and hatred for Italy, Italian anti-fascists were less sure, telling French authorities that the twenty-nine percent of Italians who spoke Arabic posed a threat: "Due to this [their knowledge of Arabic], and because the great mass of Italian workers rubs shoulders with the masses of Muslim workers in workplaces, fascist influence is penetrating dangerously into the heart of the Muslim population."[346]

The strong presence of fascists within Italy's professional classes meant that the local dissemination of Italian propaganda and goodwill was not limited to lower-class Tunisians. In early 1936, the French reported that Tunisian intellectuals interested in politics were being given Italian publications, most notably a collection of Mussolini speeches on corporate institutions.[347] French police records give us a glimpse into how the professional classes made contacts with Tunisians. In one instance, a police agent listened in to a conversation between three Italian teachers and three Tunisians who thought they were alone while drinking coffee and wine. When one of the Italians said she was a fascist at heart, and hoped Italy would take Tunisia, the Tunisians responded that they wanted to learn Italian, and would support an Italian occupation. As the party became tipsy, they attacked French policies.[348] Similarly, French police believed that the Neo-Destour treasurer, Baḥri Qiqa, frequently met with young fascist intellectuals for coffee.[349] The

346 CAD-N, 1TU/1/V/2361-2362, "Notes comuniquées par le groupe antifasciste détenu à la prison civile de Constantine", 17 December 1942.

347 CAD-N, 1TU/1/V/2137, R.G. N. 168-6, "A.S. de la situation italienne pendant le 2eme semester 1935", 17 January 1936.

348 Ibid., Chef de Police Mahdia to Commissaire Divisionnaire, N. 8793, 21 December 1939.

349 ANOM, Algérie, Oran, 5I/55, F. Tunisie, N. 2192/K, "Attitude du nationalisme indigène vis-à-vis de l'Italie", 18 October 1937.

French also worried that these professionals could serve as mediators between the Italian Consulate and the Neo-Destour party. Indeed, in Sfax, the Vice-Consulate relied on doctors who frequented the Arab quarters to provide information on Tunisian attitudes.[350] And sometimes the contacts between doctors and Tunisians could take on a decidedly political nature: a French officer in Gabès reported that two fascist doctors were caring for Neo-Destour members, going so far as to give free treatment for those in financial straits so long as they presented a party card.[351]

How successful was this Italian push to employ daily interactions in the service of propaganda? An optimistic report from the Italian Vice-Consul in Bizerta highlights the small ways in which the Italian campaign was vindicated and is worth quoting at length for showing the social complexity of thinking about fascism in colonial Tunisia:

> …in the city's coffeehouses and markets, along the streets, even in the smallest of agricultural centers, the news is spreading that Mussolini will arrive with the Italians, while the most informed in current political affairs add that Germany will take Morocco. I could provide dozens of symptomatic episodes, but a few will suffice. A native merchant from Metline, having arrived in Bizerta for business, told a co-national that it is the time for Italy to strike because everyone expects it; a worker cleaning my car, between furtive smiles and signs of agreement, directed a long discourse at me, which when translated, was found to be a reverent nod to the power of Italy, which having taking Abyssinia, will now take Tunisia; yesterday, a Muslim, having given me a perfect fascist salute, stopped me to ask in a rather fluent Italian to re-show the film on the Duce in Libya since many of his fellow Muslims were disappointed for having missed it; in Ṣuq al-ʿArba, two Arab teachers and a notary presented themselves to the consulate asking if it was possible to move to Libya, "because we can't take the French anymore"; in Ghardimaou, on the border with Algeria, the natives are restless for news concerning Fascism, and likewise in Mateur, and in the countryside of Ferryville, and in Beja, where two

350 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 3, F. Rapporti Politici, Vice-Consul Sfax report, "Incidenti tra arabi ed israeliti", 27 July 1932.

351 CAD-N, 1TU/1/V/2137, Ville de Gabès, Commissariat de Police to C.C. Gabès, "Rapport trimestriel concernant la situation italienne dans ce secteur", 30 September 1938.

> Muslim notables having returned from Libya on the cruise ship "Biancamano" have become extremely active propagandists in our favor, and continue to tirelessly describe, just like all the others who were on the cruise do in other centers, the wonderful sights to small audiences of fellow Muslims, who then repeat the declarations of "someone who saw firsthand.[352]

But this Italian view, though demonstrative of how fascism was talked about and communicated in so many different ways, was a rather optimistic one. Even at the height of the effort, the French believed that the Tunisians who admired Mussolini were a minority, and that most looked suspiciously on the Italian activities given the regime's stated interest in occupying Tunisia.[353]

Certainly, Italian aggression in Libya and Ethiopia, along with thinly veiled threats regarding Tunisia, meant that Italians seeking sympathy among Tunisians had a tough uphill climb. Tunisians found small ways to snub their noses at Italian ambitions, whether it be applauding the appearance of Haile Selassie in a newsreel to the protest of whistling Italians,[354] or giving two sous for a Muslim charity to see a merchant's display of a naked image of Mussolini in a compromising position in front of the exiled Ethiopian leader.[355] And in some cases, outsourcing propaganda efforts to local Italians could backfire spectacularly. When a twenty-seven-year old Giuseppe Calabrese arrived in Sousse in October 1938 to run an oil factory, he immediately set about demanding loyalty to fascism. In December he fired four Tunisians, accusing them of participating in an anti-Italian

352 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 7, R. Consolato Generale-Tunisi to MAE, N. 1553, "Simpatie islamiche verso l'Italia", 18 June 1937.
353 CAD-N, 1TU/1/V/2137, D.S.P., N. 3338-6, "Propagande italienne", 23 August 1937.
354 Ibid., Chef des Gardiens de la Paix to Commissaire Central, N. 6.578, 24 October 1935.
355 Ibid., Ren. Gen., N. 34-6, "A.S. du conflit italo-éthiopien", 4 January 1936.

demonstration. According to the fired workers, Calabrese had made his political motives clear, telling them, "Yesterday, you celebrated, you protested with French and Tunisian flags and cried, 'Vive la France', so go ask the French for bread, Mussolini has none for you." The Tunisians also told the French police that Calabrese had earlier forced two workers to go home for half of a work day for not giving the fascist salute upon entering the factory.[356]

Despite the mixed success of the Italian charm offensive, many fascist authorities were fairly confident in the early months of World War II that they would be welcomed by the Tunisian populace. According to one colonial police report, "a favorable expectation of [an Italian occupation] is increasingly spreading among the native populations, and proof of it can be found in the interest and respect shown by everyone when our officials, both in uniform and in plainclothes, pass through Tunisian territory." Such a report was not entirely naïve, as it recognized that in Tunis, "open and fiery hostility against Italians" had been replaced by a desire for an Italian occupation to improve economic conditions, rather than out of love for Italy or fascism.[357]

During World War II, the Italians were in the dark as to the degree to which they could work with the Neo-Destour. In August 1940, an intelligence report for the Italian Armistice Commission stated that in the case of an Italian occupation, the representatives and followers of the party hoped that Bourguiba would take over political and religious

356 Ibid., Commissaire Divisionnaire to C.C. Sousse, N. 3629, 5 December 1938.

357 ASMAE, MAI Gabinetto Segreto, B. 143, F. Tunisia, Comando Generale del Corpo Polizia dell'Africa Italiana to Gabinetto del Ministro, N. 843717-2/1, "Notizie dalla Tunisia", 14 December 1940.

control of the country, but also that the Fascist Arab Youth program based in Libya be extended to Tunisians, along with the inclusion of all Tunisian workers in the same corporatist system that existed in Libya.[358] Yet other reports indicated that the Neo-Destour was not so inclined to take fascism as a model. A long Armistice report from 1940 tried to dismiss such rumors, stating that,

> in reality, the Destour is fundamentally oriented towards a democratic spirit, and fights fascism just as it fights the French, or any other foreign domination over Tunisia. The cries of "Long live il Duce", and "Long live Italy" often repeated in Destour protests must not be attributed to the natives' desire to substitute our dominion for that of the French, but rather to irritate the French…[359]

Similarly, the President of the Armstice Delegation in North Africa, B. Mengarini, called Bourguiba "notoriously and fiercely anti-Italian", and believed that other Neo-Destour members would strongly oppose an Italian occupation in favor of complete Tunisian independence.[360]

Nevertheless, there was a tentative willingness from members of both sides to work together. While Bourguiba and other Neo-Destour leaders hoped that Germany could pressure Italy into acceding to Tunisian independence, the Italians hoped that the Tunisian nationalist movement would be willing to accept a limited form of independence under

358 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 12, F. Rapporti Politici, Delegazione di Armistizio Africa Settentrionale to Commissione d'armistizio con la Francia, N. 143, "Situazione politica in Tunisia", 16 August 1940.

359 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 11, F. Sottocomm. per lo studio delle questioni territoriali-1940, "Tunisia", Undated, p. 23

360 ASMAE, MAI Gabinetto Segreto, B. 143, F. Tunisia, Presidente della Delegazione di Armistizio to Roberto Lerici, 19 August 1940.

broad Italian control. At first, the Italians hoped that applying pressure on the French to release imprisoned activists would raise Tunisian faith in Italy's intentions.

Early in the war, the fascist journalist Dr. Carlo Ciucci, who had spent time in a French prison with Bourguiba and other Neo-Destour figures, tried to leverage his contacts into pro-Italian action. Ciucci at first hoped that he could secure the release of Toumi Ben Toumi, head of a Southern Tunisian Neo-Destour cell, who had received a five-year sentence for political activities. After receiving a letter from Toumi, penned by an imprisoned French communist leader due to the former's inability to write in French, Ciucci proposed to Mussolini that the Armistice Commission secure Toumi's release.[361] Though no action was taken, Ciucci served as a mediator between the Neo-Destour and the fascist regime in other ways. In December 1940, he forwarded a letter written by an anonymous Neo-Destour leader to Mussolini. The goal of the letter was to convince Germans and Italians to bring Tunisian nationalists to Europe where they could begin working on negotiating Tunisia's place in the post-war order. For our purposes, the letter is striking in its use of a fascist worldview to justify Tunisian independence. From the beginning of the letter, Tunisian history was summarized as one of a proud and cohesive national identity alternating between moments of glory and victimization by foreign powers. Once the eternal nature of Tunisian nationality had been established, the author then explained why it was necessary to work with the Axis, writing that "We are happy to

361 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 12, F. Rapporti Politici, Relevant documents include letter and pro-memoria from Ciucci to Gino Buti, 28 December 1940, Ciucci letter to Mussolini, 25 January 1941, Letter from R. Desrieux to Ciucci, December 22, 1940.

declare the defeat of democratic politics, the cause of all our evils. If we continue to suffer with courage the machinations of our oppressors, the intrigues of a still effective Judaism, the will of capitalists, hunger, and poverty, it is because we are certain that the hour of our liberation is near."[362] Despite these tentative feelers, the Italians did not turn to the Neo-Destour as a tool until late 1942, when the Axis' situation in North Africa was extremely precarious. Having freed Bourguiba from French imprisonment, the Italians brought him to Rome, where he was fêted. Yet Bourguiba understood that the Axis chances of victory were growing smaller, and demanded that any co-operation with Italy be predicated upon the recognition of full Tunisian independence.[363]

In the end, the Italian claims on Tunisia made any truly meaningful co-operation with the Neo-Destour impossible. Though the Italians argued among themselves in a struggle to figure out exactly what an Italian occupied Tunisia would look like from an administrative and juridical point of view, all options provided Italy with effective sovereignty over the country. The nationalist longing for independence was largely ignored, with one report arguing that fascist institutions and top-down hierarchy would bring order: "The experiment carried out in Albania, a country much less developed than Tunisia, shows that a certain level of local autonomy is not incompatible with the fullness of our control [dominio], and that the Fascist Regime, with its ability to insert people into institutions [virtù inquadratrici], can successfully adopt formulas that would fail in the

362 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 12, F. Rapporti Politici, Letter, Dr. Carlo Ciucci to Mussolini, 19 December 1940 [translated Neo-Destour letter attached].
363 Rainero, *La Rivendicazione*, pp. 357-367

hands of liberal regimes, under whose control the agitation of the dominated are but the reflection of the subversive ideas that poison the powerful."[364] The Italians' flippant disregard for Tunisian nationalists would have led to a calamitous occupation, a historical possibility rendered moot by the Allied victory over Axis forces in Tunisia in May 1943.

CONCLUSION

Italy's role as a revisionist power during the interwar years offered the opportunity of forming a pro-Arab/Islamic policy aimed at increasing Italian influence at the expense of Great Britain and France. Furthermore, in Tunisia and Egypt, large Italian communities targeted for fascist integration served as local representatives for a nationalist revolution aimed at creating a unified and disciplined political community. While Italy sometimes gained some plaudits for its stance against Great Britain and France, its pro-Italian propaganda largely fell flat, as Egyptian and Tunisian nationalists understood the nature of fascist expansionism and racism. In Egypt, the greatest draw of fascism was as a model of non-socialist state-backed modernization. Egyptians of all political persuasions could cite Italy to normalize their own plans for new institutions or state-run initiatives. Whether it was welfare, or propaganda, or agriculture, one could study or borrow from fascist experiments without necessarily becoming a fascist, or even a fascist sympathizer. Even those Egyptians that professed admiration for fascism often did so while maintaining their own particular interpretation; their understanding of fascism seems to have been informed by a desire to find an alternative to the authoritarian liberalism that had seemed to paralyze

364 ASMAE, MAI Gabinetto Segreto, B. 143, F. Tunisia, MAI, Direzione Generale degli Affari Politici, "Promemoria", 5 September 1940.

Egyptian politics in the 1930s. Italian universalism was then taken in the wrong way. Instead of demonstrating how only Italy could offer a way beyond capitalism and socialism, Egyptians tended to see Italy as just another modernizing country that could provide some insight into their own autonomous project.

Tunisian nationalists on the other hand, still had to focus almost entirely on the struggle for independence. Fascist Italy was not a model to follow, but simply a possible short-term ally against France. Since Italy appeared to be a bigger threat than France, the Destour and Neo-Destour only considered working with Italians in desperate moments. At the same time, the Italian desire to replace the French inspired a push among local Italians to ingratiate themselves with the Tunisian population. Here the Italians again failed, though not without generating a certain amount of naïveté about potential Tunisian reactions to an Italian occupation. While the Italians could adequately point out French flaws, they could never elaborate a program capable of calming Tunisian apprehensions.

Chapter Three: Courting Muslims: The Parti Populaire Français in French Algeria

INTRODUCTION

During November and December 1942, just weeks after the Allied occupation of North Africa, the Gaullist police chief André Achiary interrogated Ferdinand Canavaggio, the secretary of Yves Châtel, the last governor-general of Algeria appointed by Vichy. The goal of Achiary was to find evidence of direct collaboration between Châtel and the Germans. Much of Canavaggio's revelations revolved around Châtel's relations with Algerians in contact with French fascist political parties and German officials. In May 1945, the same Achiary, as the sub-prefect of Guelma, would later play a leading role in the violent French repression of Algerians around Sétif.[365] Achiary was not alone in his wariness of the connections between Algerian nationalists and fascists. Local communists joined him in the May massacres, and French and Algerian communist party papers blamed "servants of fascism" for the alleged Algerian insurrection.[366] One Algerian Communist Party flyer argued that holdover Vichy fascists had worked with "unscrupulous" Algerian

365 In 1956, Achiary would also participate in the Rue de Thèbes bombing that escalated the Battle of Algiers before joining the OAS. Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace, Algeria 1954-1962* (New York, 2006), p. 184. For an in-depth account of the Sétif-Guelma massacres, see Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Aux origines*, pp. 256-314.

366 Allison Drew, "Communists, State and Civil Society in Colonial Algeria, 1945-1954", *Orient-Institut Studies*, 1 (2012), pp. 14-20. For some French Algerian communists, the hatred of Arabs was more permanent. According to Rémi Kauffer, certain OAS members fought with the International Brigades in Spain and "brought back a ferocious hatred of Arabs, who in their eyes were brothers of General Franco's Moors." Rémi Kauffer, "OAS: la guerre franco-française d'Algérie", in Mohammed Harbi and Benjamin Stora (eds.), *La guerre d'Algérie* (Paris, 2010), p. 666.

nationalists to provoke an incident that would justify a fascist coup.[367] Even the socialist governor-general of Algeria, Yves Chataigneau echoed these unfounded accusations by speaking of "hitlerite terrorists" and "disorderly elements of hitlerite inspiration".[368]

The French left soon pulled back from this position while the right continued to point to Moscow as the primary harmful influence on French Algeria. Yet the pairing of Algerian nationalists with fascism remained a potentially convenient one. In April 1956, as the war in Algeria raged on, Robert Herly wrote in the *Nouvelle Revue Française d'Outre-Mer* that "a great number of their [Pan-Arabists] leaders were politically raised in the pan-Germanist school and many among them were remunerated agents of Hitlerism. They assimilated his methods and decided to make use of them… Pan-arabism was profoundly influenced by pan-Germanism which offered itself to it as a model."[369] Recently, the question of possible Algerian complicity with fascism and Nazism has returned with the novelist Boualem Sansal, who has explored his country's repressed moral responsibility for the Holocaust in his 2008 novel, *Le village de l'allemand*.[370]

Scholarly work on the reception of fascism and Nazism among North Africans, and for the purposes of this chapter, Algerians, has largely concentrated on the Nazi side of the equation. The first step was taken by Charles-Robert Ageron, whose 1979 article outlined

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367 ANOM, 91501/54-55, F. Amis du manifeste-Evènements de Sétif-1945, "Il n'y a pas de 'Révolte Arabe' Mais un complot fasciste: Voilà la vérité!", Undated.

368 Charles–Robert Ageron, "Les troubles du nord-constantinois en mai 1945: Une tentative insurrectionelle?", *Vingtième Siècle*, 4 (1984), pp. 30-31.

369 Robert Herly, "L'influence allemande dans le Panislamisme contemporain", *Nouvelle Revue Française d'Outre-Mer*, April 1956, p. 36.

370 Boualem Sansal, *Le village de l'allemand, ou, Le journal des frères Schiller* (Paris, 2008).

the German campaign to gain support from North Africans.[371] In 1990 the French journalists Roger Faligot and Rémi Kauffer placed an emphasis on Algeria in their book that explores the "alliance" between Islamists and Nazis and its post-war consequences.[372] While these works (and most contemporary literature from the "Islamo-fascist" school) focuses on German fascism, a recent book by Samuel Kalman on French Algerian colonial fascism touches on the attempt by French fascists to appeal to Algerians. Kalman's main thesis is that the interwar French Algerian right formed a unique form of colonial fascism, differentiating itself from French metropolitan variants. According to Kalman, the colonial variant was more vehemently anti-Semitic, xenophobic, and racist than metropolitan fascist movements, while lacking the "revolutionary" aspirations of the latter in favor of maintaining the colonial status-quo. In order to curry the favor of the naturally rightist French Algerian electorate, the two primary rightist parties, the Croix-de-Feu/Parti Social Français (CdF/PSF) and the Parti Populaire Français (PPF) had to ditch their larger platforms and conform to colonial desires. As a result, any promises of reforms held out to Algerians could only be a mask for reactionary intentions. From this perspective, the story of the French rightist appeal to Algerians is one in which the French colonial right attempts to dupe Algerians, who are too politically astute to be swayed, with the exception of some misguided individuals.[373]

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371 Charles-Robert Ageron, "Les populations du Maghreb face à la propagande allemande", *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale*, 114 (April 1979), pp. 1-39.

372 Roger Faligot and Rémi Kauffer, *Le Croissant et la Croix Gammée: Les secrets de l'alliance entre l'Islam et le nazisme d'Hitler à nos jours* (Paris, 1990).

373 Kalman, *French Colonial Fascism*, pp. 140-150.

A closer look shows a different perspective in which the most radical French rightist party, the PPF, opened up a realm of discourse and action that could be appropriated by Algerians. The PPF discourse, though limited at times by the colonial concerns enumerated by Kalman, stressed a vastly renovated imperial system along authoritarian and statist lines. Consequently, the PPF positioned itself as a radical rightist critique of the colonial status-quo, and faced suspicion even from Vichy administrators working to carry out a scaled-down version of the PPF imperial platform. Algerian political activists took notice of the PPF's critique with varied responses.

FRENCH ALGERIA AT A CROSSROADS: THE CRISIS OF THE 1930S

During the first six months of 1930, French Algerians celebrated the centenary of the conquest of Algiers in 1830. A series of parades, speeches, conferences, and other special events throughout the country focused on the triumph of French civilizing efforts while nearly erasing the presence of Algerians in their own country.[374] While the Centenary may have comforted French Algerians, it was humiliating for Algerians who saw the previous hundred years as a period marked by physical violence, appropriation of land, interference in religious affairs, and exclusion from civil equality, not one of military glory and civilizational progress. The lack of accompanying reforms for Algerians simply continued a trend of French unwillingness to change a status-quo built upon the exclusion of Algerians from civil and political equality.

374 Jean-Robert Henry, "Le centenaire de l'Algérie, triomphe éphémère de la pensée algérianiste" in *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période coloniale*, pp. 369-375.

By the mid-1930s, Algerians had responded in several ways to the political impasse. One strategy favored by well-educated Algerians, known at the time as *évolués*, and often practicing law or medicine, was assimilation. Led by figures like Ferhat Abbas and Muhammad Salah Bendjelloul working in organizations such as the Fédération des Élus, these more moderate Algerians initially rejected Algerian nationalism and sought to emphasize Algerian loyalty to France in order to hold the French accountable for their supposedly universal values of justice and equality.[375] A different sort of reform movement officially began in 1931 with the foundation of the Association of ʿUlema. The focus of the ʿUlema was to purify and modernize an Algerian Islam deemed to be compromised by centuries of superstition, ignorance, and more recently, by French interference. As such, the ʿUlema's cultural and social agenda led them to a political stance that steadily took on an Algerian nationalist tone in order to protect Islam and the Arabic language against the dangers of secular assimilation, the surveillance of Islamic practices, and the dominance of the French language.[376] Finally, under the leadership of Messali Hadj, and with the initial support of French communists, the Etoile Nord-Africaine (North African Star, ENA, and from March 1937 on, the Parti Populaire Algérien), founded in 1926, became the first explicitly Algerian nationalist party. Though at first limited to Algerian migrant workers

375 Mahfoud Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme Algérien: Question nationale et politique algérienne, 1919-1951, Tome I* (2nd Ed.) (Algiers, 1981), pp. 378-385.
376 James McDougall, "Abdelhamid Ben Badis et l'Association des oulémas", in *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période coloniale*, pp. 387-392.

in Paris, and suppressed from 1929 to 1933, the ENA-PPA would later tap into urban angst in Algeria, resonating particularly among lower-class tradesmen and youth.[377]

While Algerians began to enter into mass politics, the French Algerian political world also underwent profound transformations. Gone was a longstanding political system of patronage described by David Prochaska; in its place came more ideologically driven party affiliations.[378] From 1934-1935, the right-wing veterans' movement-turned-party, the Croix-de-Feu and the populist farmer's party, the Front paysan, gained much traction in Algeria, partly due to their taking up of traditional settler grievances with Parisian and administrative interference in local affairs.[379] The socialist and communist parties also saw a concurrent growth as Algeria's working-classes continued their efforts to organize.[380] At the start of 1936 then, both Algerian and French political scenes had grown more ideological and fractured. With the election of the leftist Popular Front coalition in May 1936, the aspirations and tensions of all these political movements unleashed a political crisis in Algeria.

Discarding the usual French hesitancy to promise any significant or specific reforms for Algerians, the Popular Front made a series of promises that the eminent historian of Algeria, Charles-Robert Ageron, has characterized as unrealistic and

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377 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, pp. 182-204, 504.

378 Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, pp. 180-198. According to Prochaska, Algerian politics in the late 1800s and early 1900s was based on "personalities, not principles", as party platforms meant little compared to local patronage networks.

379 Kalman, *French Colonial Fascism*, pp. 56-93.

380 Allison Drew, *We are no longer in France: Communists in colonial Algeria* (New York, 2014), pp. 86-99.

irresponsible.[381] Flush with enthusiasm, the disparate Algerian movements briefly unified in June 1936 through a Muslim Congress, which hoped to work with the new government to radically change French Algeria. Yet even if the Popular Front could maintain its promises, the Muslim Congress was likely to split up, since the differences among the moderates open to assimilation, the ʿUlema, and the openly nationalist Etoile were too broad to paper over with vague rhetorical calls to unity. The difficulty of the coalition was made clear when the Etoile leader Messali Hadj unexpectedly called for Algerian independence in front of a large crowd shortly after the founding of the Congress. Similarly, French leftist parties did little to encourage a truly broad coalition. Though the Socialists had become more open to reform, the new anti-fascist line saw the communists prioritize the maintenance of the French empire at the expense of the liberation of colonial peoples. And no matter the official stances, many French Algerian communist and socialist party members were wary of supporting potentially nationalist Algerians like Hadj.[382]

The primary political issue that drove a wedge between this diverse set of political parties and movements was the electoral reform project sponsored by prime minister Léon Blum and a former Algerian governor, Maurice Viollette. The Blum-Viollette proposal would allow about 20,000-30,000 Algerians who were decorated veterans, officers, elected representatives, or diplômés to vote in the same college as the French without having to renounce their personal status.[383] Previously, a Muslim Algerian could only gain full

381 Ageron, *De l'Algérie "française" à l'Algérie algérienne*, pp. 389-393.

382 For the communist struggles in adapting to the increasing desire for Algerian independence, see Drew, *We are no longer in France,* pp. 81-105.

383 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, pp. 406-409.

French citizenship if they accepted French civil law instead of their traditional Qurʾanic statutes. Since only the most assimilated Algerians took this step, the personal status question was the immediate roadblock to political and civil equality for Algerians. The Popular Front promised to remove that obstacle, but only for a limited number of Algerians. While socialists, communists, and moderates like Abbas supported the reform, the ʿUlema were hesitant to throw their weight behind it, and the Etoile was adamantly opposed on the grounds that it would solidify an Algerian elite with few connections to an overwhelming majority still deprived of rights.[384]

Amid the constant quarrelling between Algerian and French leftist parties, the French Algerian right reacted in force to the electoral victory of the Popular Front. The Croix-de-Feu made much of the wave of strikes that followed the election and saw Algerian and French workers marching under the same banners. In the eyes of many French-Algerians, the whole colonial edifice was at risk of collapsing, and order had to be re-imposed. At a local level, this saw the rise of demagogic figures like the mayor of Oran, Gabriel Lambert, who sought to unite the entire Algerian right behind an umbrella organization, the Rassemblement National. The Blum-Viollette proposal, seen by many rightists as a stepping stone to an electoral system dominated by the Algerian "masses", further mobilized resistance to the left. Street violence, disruptions of political meetings, and poisonous language in newspapers characterized the daily hashing out of issues between right and left during the Popular Front period.[385]

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384 Ibid., pp. 447-475.

385 Kalman, *French Colonial Fascism*, pp. 95-125.

An economy and society in crisis accompanied the political turbulence. For decades, large French landowners had expanded their control over the most fertile lands at the expense of small French farmers and the Algerian rural population. By 1930, the average European landholding was over seven times larger than that of an Algerian.[386] Furthermore, the focus on viticulture in the 1880s and 1890s created an export-reliant agricultural economy that was shattered by the Great Depression. With the collapse of wheat and wine prices, most rural Algerians fell into crippling debt.[387] To make matters worse, the population growth rate of two percent among Algerians during the 1920s put crushing pressure on the food supply, leading to mass malnutrition.[388] In sum, the structural limiting of Algerians' agricultural opportunities coupled with the world depression laid the foundations for a social crisis. Masses of dispossessed and desperate migrants sought refuge and opportunities in coastal cities previously dominated by Europeans, while others took on industrial work in France. Such population movements burdened the French administration, disrupted traditional social relations, and ensured that the new forms of mass politics would have a substantial pool of frustrated actors to draw upon. In this context of rapid political transformation and socio-economic crisis, the French right hoped to draw upon Algerian support in a bid to reshape the basis for French imperial sovereignty over Algeria.

386 Daniel Rivet, *Le Maghreb à l'épreuve de la colonisation* (Paris, 2010), p. 260.
387 Ageron, *De l'Algérie "française" à l'Algérie algérienne*, p. 411.
388 Rivet, *Le Maghreb*, pp. 263-264.

THE PARTI POPULAIRE FRANÇAIS MAKES ITS CASE TO ALGERIANS

Though the Croix de Feu (later the Parti Social Français) and Gabriel Lambert's Rassemblement National both made efforts to appeal to Muslims, neither went so far as the Parti Populaire Français (French Popular Party, PPF). Founded in June 1936, in the midst of a tense political situation following the Popular Front's electoral victory in May, the PPF positioned itself as a more extreme alternative to the rightist parties that had failed to stem the tide of the left. The founder and leader of the PPF, Jacques Doriot, had earlier been a popular and influential figure in the French Communist Party (PCF). The young radical gained national attention as the most boisterous opponent of the French and Spanish campaign against ʿAbd al-Krim's Rif Republic in the early 1920s, thus becoming a hero for those who sympathized with the party's anti-colonial stance.[389] However, in 1932 Doriot was expelled from the PCF for advocating an alliance with socialists. As a result, a man whose dedication to the Komintern earned the praise of Gregory Zinoviev, who called him France's first authentic Bolshevik,[390] began to shift his sympathies to fascism. Doriot's working-class background and popular base of Saint-Denis, where he served as mayor, gave the PPF a proletarian sheen largely missing from other French rightist parties. Furthermore, some of Doriot's lieutenants and working-class supporters followed him first into political exile, and then into fascist extremism. Whereas the Parti Social Français

389 Leaders in the Algerian PSF sections, worried about the rise of the PPF, tried to take advantage of Doriot's connections with Rif leaders by suggesting that former lieutenants of ʿAbd al-Krim were joining the bourgeoning PPF. Such associations could confirm French suspicions that Doriot was an erratic political radical. ANOM, Algérie, Department d'Oran, //84, Chef de la Sûreté Départementale à Monsieur le Préfet, "Parti Populaire Français", 7 January 1937.

390 Jean-Paul Brunet, *Jacques Doriot: Du communisme au fascisme* (Paris, 1986), p. 70.

constituted a more moderately conservative, middle-class populism, the PPF served as a gathering point for working-class rightists, the more extreme petite bourgeoisie, outcasts from leftist parties, and wealthy industrialists looking for a tool to protect their interests. Those who left the PSF in hopes of finding a more fascist party were not disappointed. The PPF attacked parliamentary democracy, clamored for a leadership cult (with Doriot clearly in mind), and furiously attacked Jews.[391]

The extremism of the PPF made it an especially attractive party on Algerian soil. By the mid-1930s, the Algerian right had become quite powerful and vocal. Since the Popular Front's domestic and colonial agenda appeared to confirm the worst fears of many French rightists, the intransigent positions of the PPF quickly brought it great success. Along with southern France, Algeria constituted one of the PPF's strongholds.[392] According to Algiers Sûreté, after a late 1936 Doriot visit, PPF membership in that city had reached one thousand, including one hundred Algerians. Almost all members were working class, with the head of the Sûreté estimating that one-third came from the Popular Front, while the other two thirds came from the recently dissolved rightist leagues.[393] Fears of the left inadvertently stoking Algerian nationalism may have caused some Popular Front

391 For an outline of the late 1930s development of the PPF, see, Philippe Burrin, *La dérive fasciste: Doriot, Déat, Bergery, 1933-1945* (Paris, 1986), pp. 278-312.
392 Soucy, *Second Wave*, p. 242.
393 ANOM, Algérie, Department d'Alger, 1K/72, Sûreté Départmentale d'Alger, N. 8033, "Parti Populaire Français", 18 December 1936.

supporters to turn to the right. The PPF hoped to take advantage of European fears, while also seeking recruits among the disaffected Algerian working class.[394]

At first, the PPF was rather clumsy in addressing Algerians. On 21 October 1936, a private PPF meeting at the Grand Café in Oran gathered 1800 attendants, including around 100 Algerians. Zine Bentabet introduced Doriot's Algerian chief and longstanding political partner, Victor Arrighi, in Arabic, proclaiming that Doriot and Arrighi's Communist history and campaign in favor of ʿAbd al-Krim during the Rif War served as proof of their noble intentions regarding North Africans. Yet, to Bentabet's visible surprise, Arrighi quickly moved to distance himself from his earlier communism before asserting that France was not yet so weak that it could not buy enough cannons and machine guns for the 800,000 French Algerians to withstand a revolt of eight million "*indigènes*". Lambert quickly tried to soothe the offended Algerians, but the incident is illustrative of how little thought the PPF Algerian delegate had initially put into the "indigène" question.[395]

Yet this rather frank element of PPF discourse never truly disappeared. Even in May 1938, in front of an audience of two hundred in the city of Médéa, Doriot gave the

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394 Ibid., N. 291, Attached document "Aux propagandistes du Parti Populaire Français en Algérie", 19 January 1937.

395 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Oran //84 Sûreté Départementale N. 8074, 22 Oct. 1936. The "indigène question", as communists put it in the 1920s, revolved around interpretations of the historical role of Algerians: did they constitute an obstacle to progress, could they be included in the communist movement, and how could they be given equal rights while ensuring the success of communism and the safeguarding of the French community? For the PPF, the question would simply revolve around how the French could dismantle Algerian nationalism without resorting to assimilation. Ahmed Koulakssis and Gilbert Meynier, "Sur le mouvement ouvrier et les communistes d'Algérie au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale", *Le Mouvement social*, N. 130 (Jan.-Mar. 1985), pp. 3-32.

following warning to the twenty-one Algerians in attendance: "Muslim friends, I press you to my heart to show you how much I love you. I must tell you strongly and without acrimony that your policy of politics of independence must cease. We are in Algeria and we will stay here, whether it pleases you or not…Choose from the bottom of your conscience the regime that will please you the most, but remember that it's better for you to see the smile of the benevolent Frenchman than the little moustache of Hitler or the boot of Mussolini." The police officer in attendance reported that while some Algerians applauded this threat, five others who had spent time with the PPA or the PCA lowered their eyes in embarrassment.[396]

Despite these rare admissions that any questioning of French sovereignty was a transgressive line that would turn amity into enmity, the PPF generally avoided such antagonistic claims. Instead, PPF discourse for Algerians revolved around the positive goals of economic improvement and protection of religious traditions and negative attacks against communists and Jews. Targeting these latter two groups also served to shield Algerians from PPF criticism; any anti-French actions on the part of Algerians could be attributed to the subversive influence of Judeo-Bolshevism. In turn, this view, depicting Algerians as naïve victims, deprived them of agency, since their aspirations to autonomy and a national identity were largely ignored. But the PPF had few other options. Any acknowledgement of Algerian agency would implicitly recognize the legitimacy of their demands outside of the context of the fight against Bolshevism and international

396 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger 4I/24 "Réunion du P.P.F." 19 May 1938

capitalism. And yet, the PPF's whole campaign was predicated on Algerians making a political choice to ally with the French right instead of its competitors. This could only be done by winning them over with some sort of program. Here the PPF leaders greatly underestimated, like most Europeans of all political persuasions, the strength of the Algerian desire for independence.

The first step to establishing a program for Algerians was to focus on economics. The PPF had three reasons to call for the amelioration of the material plight of Algerians. Firstly, the party could position itself as saviors in the traditional model of the "civilizing mission". Secondly, by shifting the focus from political rights to economic conditions, the hated Blum-Viollette proposal could be rejected while offering an alternate reform program. Finally, the PPF could portray the poverty and starvation-stricken countryside as the perfect incubator for communist agitation, thus calling their French members and sympathizers to take economic reform seriously.

The official policy towards Algerians was broadly established at the 1st North African Congress of the PPF, held between the 2 and 3 January 1937 in Algiers. The party resolution set the tone for the next six years of PPF propaganda by "calling for the realization of a new and bold social policy to satisfy the legitimate economic demands of the Muslim world" and "proclaiming the necessity of giving… bread, housing, and instruction to the laboring masses" since "elevating the standards of living for millions of Algerian workers has more importance in the eyes of the Parti Populaire Français than

granting political rights to a minority of favored electors."[397] Not all members were on board; during a discussion of the motion, Arrighi received implicit pushback from a leader of the PPF section of Sidi-Bel-Abbès, Félix Roquefère, who asserted that communists could not tempt Algerians in villages, since the latter were well remunerated by colons. Arrighi, careful to avoid upsetting French colons, diplomatically blamed the government's policies for providing a basis for communist agitation before stating more bluntly that the PPF, though protective of colon interests, would teach such landowners how to forfeit excess profits to increase the social welfare of Algerians.[398]

Shortly after the resolution, Arrighi scored a success by attaining the agreement of twenty colons from Lamoricière to raise the salaries of Algerian laborers by fifteen to twenty percent.[399] An internal PPF notice stated that a similar increase was obtained around Mercier-Lacombe.[400] A few weeks later, Arrighi reported that he had also instructed Oranais landowners to prefer Algerian workers over foreign labor.[401] Since many of these laborers were Spaniards with connections to the recently nationalized French, and often received preferential treatment, Arrighi was implicitly asking some colons to show more

397 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 1K/72 Sureté Départementale d'Alger, N. 291 3. Motion adopté par le Congrès Algérien du P.P.F.

398 Ibid., Sûreté Départmentale d'Alger, N. 40 "Congrès Algérien du Parti Populaire Français", 6 January 1937.

399 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Oran, //84, "Réunion Générale des membres de la Fédération d'Oran" 18 February 1937.

400 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 1F/392, Notice from Fédération d'Oran to Bureau Africain, 17 February 1937.

401 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger 1K/72, "Rapport" Sûreté Départementale d'Alger N. 1502, 11 March 1937.

support for Algerians than for their former Spanish compatriots.[402] Meanwhile, PPF posters graced the walls of Algiers decrying the plight of two million Algerians suffering from famine and tuberculosis.[403] The proposed response was not just higher salaries, but also agricultural reform that would leave large French landholdings intact. During the party's 2nd North African Congress, held in Algiers in November 1938, Gaston Guigon, a doctor who recently became the party's federal secretary in Constantine, outlined the proposed measures for Algerians. These included agricultural schools, corporative funds for crises, state funds for young husbands looking to farm, and professional offices to cut out exploitative middlemen. Guigon even painted a picture of his ideal Algerian agricultural society, which would begin as small state projects:

> So, why not envisage the establishment of experimental zones, limited in space, but where a total and simultaneous work could be done? It would be possible to delimit several of the most populated indigène spaces, and to develop roads, hygienically conceived villages provided with simply styled and comfortable houses; to create agricultural institutes and model farms, schools, artisanal centers, youth clubs, athletic organizations, musical societies, study groups…what else can I say?...provided that the standard of indigène life is raised and that the education of the body, spirit, and soul is equally and simultaneously pursued. And how can we forget the example of Rome which liberally provided its veterans with fertile land? Are not the indigène veterans designated to create colonies, in the etymological sense of the word?[404]

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402 Anne Dulphy, *L'Algérie des Pieds-noirs, Entre l'Espagne et la France*, (Paris, 2014), pp. 24-33.

403 ANOM, Algérie, Department'Alger 1k/72, "Rapport" Sûreté Départementale d'Alger N. 3585, 20 May 1937. One PPF member suggested that the party explore the possibility of a new cloth that would allow for more weather-proof tents for the Algerians. Such an innovation would secure sympathy while providing new work for textile factories. ANOM, Algérie, Department d'Alger, 1F/391, Letter to Bureau Africain, 29 January, 1937.

404 ANOM, Algérie, Department d'Alger, 4I/24, *Le Pionnier*, "Le fait algérien et le problème social", p. 5.

While the administration of aid to Algerian farmers was common to the prescriptions of a wide array of colonialists, the notions of a harmoniously organized and healthy rural society shared much with the Italian rural planning projects of the time. Furthermore, his call for veteran Muslim agricultural colonies foreshadowed Italo Balbo's efforts in Libya the following year. Finally, Guigon's vision shares much with the failed "Arab kingdom" program initiated by Louis-Napoleon in the 1860s with the backing of Arabophile military figures and Saint-Simonians. The latter in particular, through the works of Prosper Enfantin and Ismaÿl Urbain, argued that a Franco-Algerian civilization could be built if Algerian communal land in the interior of the country was split into private plots and protected from rapacious French settlers. From there, a modern agricultural civilization would develop with the help of French industry and technology, allowing the Algerians to slowly discard what the Saint-Simonians viewed as the feudal and theocratic elements of Algerian life.[405] The question was whether a program that had little backing from French colonialists and Algerians during the 1860s would be any more popular in the 1930s. According to Guigon, the current French colonial administration knew what had to be done, but lacked the willpower to act decisively. Only the PPF could fulfill the necessary reforms.

Guigon was not alone in protesting against the incompetency of the French administration. In January 1938, in front of forty three Algerians from Médéa, Jean Fossati, the party secretary for Algiers, attacked the nearby Ghrib dam project for expropriating the

405 Osama W. Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria* (Stanford, 2010), pp. 154-188.

land of four hundred Algerians while still imposing taxes on lands that were no longer owned.[406]

Despite the apparent benevolence, a close look at PPF discourse reveals practical concerns. In a May 1937 bulletin, the party bragged that it was the first to alert public opinion of the "urgent measures to take to not let men living under the tricolor flag to starve to death" and "to demand the dissolution of the communist party whose hateful propaganda pushes those exasperated by famine to rise up against France."[407] Bringing attention to the issue was therefore a tool to apply pressure on the French administration to crack down on communists. Furthermore, the image of the protective French flag framed the suffering of Algerians not as a humanitarian disaster, but as a challenge to the strength and dignity of the French nation as a consolidated community. Finally, agricultural reform would be based not on redistributing large French estates, but rather through the breaking up of collective Algerian lands as well as those whose ownership was unclear.[408] Hence the PPF could couch controversial land reform in the long-term French project of privatizing Algerian land ownership and use in the name of modernization and liberalization. Thus, in the agricultural sector, the PPF was not an advocate of maintaining Algerian land-usage traditions. Instead, it hoped to keep Algerians out of cities through small individual plots backed by the state. Instead of forming an urban proletariat exposed to communism, these farmers would then serve as a reservoir for loyal and healthy soldiers.

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406 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Alger 4I/24, "Réunions Publiques", 27 January 1938.

407 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Alger 1F/392, "Bulletin de Presse du Bureau Africain" N. 9, 30 April 1937, p. 2.

408 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Alger 4I/24, *Le Pionnier*, 5 August 1937.

Even with these efforts to shift the focus on economic and material issues, Doriot and Arrighi were constrained to offer an alternative to the Blum-Viollette electoral reform project. The primary goal for the PPF was to differentiate itself from its rivals on the right, particularly La Rocque's PSF. Fortunately for Doriot, La Rocque took a rather unimaginative line in his own proposal. Given the PSF's attempted turn to moderate nationalism, La Rocque wanted to keep open the possibility of assimilation, but without accepting Viollette's admission that Algerians adhering to the personal status should become full French citizens.[409] Other rightists proposed that a separate electoral college be created for 400,000 Algerians, rather than allow for the entrance of 20-30,000 in a single college. Doriot and Arrighi took the idea of a separate college further, and proposed that it be based upon universal suffrage. Such a stance allowed party leaders to rail against the aristocracy of voters that all the other plans would supposedly offer. In his speech to the First North African Congress, Arrighi criticized the notion that elites must be drawn from the ranks of the educated, distinguishing between a privileged elite and an elite of courageous and patriotic men, declaring that "The man who is part of the elite [l'homme de l'élite], he is maybe illiterate; courageous and humble, he is the man who works, who fights".[410] The PPF could then continue to portray itself to Algerians as a form of French nationalist populism that included poorer Algerians. Most importantly, by advocating the

409 Philippe Machefer, "Autour du problème algérien en 1936-1938: La doctrine algérienne du P.S.F: Le P.S.F. et le projet Viollette-Blum", *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 10 (1963), pp. 147-156.

410 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 1K/72, Sûreté Départmentale d'Alger, N. 291, "Discours prononcé par M. Arrighi", p. 2, 19 January 1937.

separate college, the PPF was securing that political control would remain entirely in the hands of the minority French.

For the purposes of appealing to Muslims, the unique college allowed the PPF to entirely drop the rhetoric of assimilation. Like many rightists, the PPF chiefs feared that assimilation would inevitably lead to a small group of Algerians living between French and Algerian cultures. The resulting alienation would then lead these figures to such anti-French ideologies as communism, Algerian nationalism, and pan-Arabism/pan-Islamism. And while the right could still portray themselves as the bearers of French civilization, the basis of such claims rested largely on technological and organizational capabilities. Why would the PPF want Muslims to assimilate into a French culture that most party leaders thought was decadent and corrupt? The pursuit of wealth, equality, and liberty in urban settings could only lead to harmful results for a party dedicated to hierarchy, discipline, and individual sacrifice to a community. The response was a more extreme form of association. For most French colonial figures and moderate politicians, association accepted the gaping differences between French and colonial societies, and sought to bolster French rule by accommodating these differences where possible. Assimilation was not entirely rejected, since many held on dearly to the idea that Europe was at the forefront of a universal civilization, but one whose inclusiveness was pushed into a distant and nebulous future.[411] Contrary to this version of long-term assimilation, the PPF offered a more static vision of association. For the PPF, association was not a means to an end, but

411 Martin Thomas, *The French empire between the wars: Imperialism, politics and society* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 54-56, 60-62.

an end itself, since it allowed for the maintenance of authentic communities in the face of modernity's corrosive elements. Modernity would be limited to an economic customs-union and a greater metropolitan focus on colonial economic development, which would be presumably facilitated by a more authoritarian government.[412] In that sense, the PPF hoped to combine the failed modernization proposals of Albert Sarraut, who sought to employ French capital to create an economically consolidated imperial community,[413] with rightist notions of hierarchy, discipline, and totally distinct cultures.

As such, the PPF argued that association did not just guarantee French sovereignty, but also the protection of Islamic culture from the French. Arrighi even acknowledged that this line would require more tolerance and understanding from French Christians, stating that "We don't have the right to get involved in such things [Muslim customs and laws]; they are sacred. We cannot allow ourselves to compare religions: they are neither superior or inferior to each other; they are simply different, and all respectable."[414] For a moment in early 1939, French intelligence believed that the Algerian ʿUlema appreciated the PPF's stance against assimilation as a boost to their own efforts to advocate for a profound Islamic and Algerian identity.[415] However, one must be wary of reading too much respect and

412 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 4I/24, *Le Pionnier*, "Les grandes lignes de notre politique en Afrique du Nord", 24 November 1938.

413 Jacques Marseille, *Empire colonial et capitalisme français: Histoire d'un divorce* (Paris, 2005), pp. 245-247, 445-452.

414ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 1K/72, S, Sûreté Départmentale d'Alger, N. 291, "Discours prononcé par M. Arrighi", p. 5, 19 January 1937.

415 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, F. 1939, Préfecture d'Alger, C.I.E., "La politique indigène dans le départment d'Alger au début de 1939". An ʿUlema journal, *al-Shahab* even wrote of the "importance of the P.P.F., which, wisely organized by J. Doriot acts in the interest of the workers,

sympathy into PPF positions. For colonial societies would theoretically be in permanent need of French support, since only the technologically advanced French culture could provide economic and military support and protection. As Doriot stated in 1938, "we are here to command, and we will not leave to anyone else our task and duty to command."[416]

ALGERIAN PPF LEADERS

Yet Doriot, Arrighi, and associates were not the only PPF members to speak to Algerian concerns. The party showcased several Algerians as leading figures. The most significant leader was Djillali Bentami, a naturalized Algerian born in Mostaganem in 1896. Bentami studied medicine in Lyon before entering politics in Algeria as a Municipal Counselor in his home city and as a vice-president in the Oranie section of the Fédération des élus musulmans. A look at Bentami's subsequent political career highlights the fluid nature of Algerian politics, as well as how an Algerian could balance membership in a far-right party with the defense of Algerian interests.

Despite holding an influential position within the Fédération des élus musulmans, Bentami soon differed from most of his colleagues by opposing the Popular Front and the Blum-Viollette proposal. Given his family history, his stance is perhaps not so surprising. His brother Belkacem had taken a very moderate and pro-French position during the reform debates of the 1920s. At that time, the Emir Khaled had rejected assimilationist reform in favor of a platform that would protect the identity of Algerians while still claiming the civil

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and does not preach class struggle, but the organization of the great French Empire"; "L'activité indigène dans le départment d'Alger", p. 8.

416 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 4I/24, *Le Pionnier*, "La mission et le programme du P.P.F. en Afrique du Nord", 24 November 1938.

rights of French law. Belkacem Bentami spearheaded efforts to marginalize Khaled among the Algerian elite, claiming that he represented an Algerian threat to France.[417] Following in his brother's footsteps, Djillali rejected the mid-1930s reform proposals for being too radical. Shortly after his dismissal of both the Popular Front and the Algerian-led reform efforts that hoped to work with the French government, the younger Bentami became a member of the Central Committee of the PPF while retaining his post as a Counselor until 1941. At that point, the mayor of Mostaganem refused to consider Bentami for a position as the Algerian mayoral adjunct. Despite, or perhaps because he was a fervent backer of the PPF, Bentami found himself without an official post. In response, he sought to make himself an unofficial mediator between Mostaganem's Algerians and the local administration.[418]

Bentami soon proved himself rather adept when applying himself to mass politics, as he positioned himself as a leader of the local youth through his patronage of Algerian athletic associations. Furthermore, he championed the Algerians when it came to protecting Islam. In early 1942, when the construction of a road resulted in the partial destruction of a Muslim cemetery and the desecration of tombs, Bentami quickly arrived at the scene and communicated the offense to local officials. During the 1930s, key debates concerning the naturalization of North Africans and the respect owed to Islam by the French had revolved

417 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, pp. 113, 213-214.

418 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Oran, 5I/10, Dossier Dr. Bentami, Préfecture d'Oran, CIE, N. 525, "Notice de renseignements concernant le Docteur Bentami de Mostaganem", 23 September 1942.

around the cemetery as a sacred place.[419] Taking advantage of such a grievance could therefore solidify Bentami's position as a trustworthy mediator. Shortly after, Bentami also made his displeasure known when French, and not Algerian children were the beneficiaries of a distribution of chocolate. According to French intelligence, these interventions were widely commented upon in the city and surrounding area, and exploited by his friends.[420]

Though his affiliation with the PPF and his unauthorized mediation made Bentami a target for police surveillance, he was still of use to Vichy officials. When the Algerians of Mostaganem protested the French failure to provide sheep for the holiday of Mawlid, Bentami suggested to the sub-prefect that the French were at fault for publicizing the availability of victuals instead of being honest about the real lack of supplies. According to Bentami, such mistakes were damaging the reputation of France, especially since there was no effective counter-propaganda. Furthermore, Bentami even met with Vichy's influential Interior Minister, Pierre Pucheu, to inform him of the pitiful state of Algerians.[421]

During this time, Bentami still worked with the PPF, and French authorities noted his unsuccessful efforts to draw Islamic notables to Doriot's party. In late 1942, Bentami travelled to France for a party congress, and was unable to return as a result of the Allied occupation of Algeria and Morocco in November. His actions in France at this time are not

419 Dewhurst Lewis, *Divided Rule*, pp. 131-164.
420 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Oran, 5I/10, Dossier Dr. Bentami, Préfecture d'Oran, CIE, N. 256, "Activité du docteur Bentami à Mostaganem", 14 May 1942.
421 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Oran, 5I/10, Dossier Dr. Bentami, Sous-préfecture Mostaganem, 31 March, 1942.

clear, but he is said to have participated in demonstrations for Marcel Déat's collaborationist party, the Rassemblement nationale populaire while sending money to his family in Algeria through his contacts with the PPA.

Despite his involvement with collaborators, Bentami was acquitted by the Civic Chamber of Oran in June 1945, and returned to political life as a candidate for Ferhat Abbas' moderate-nationalist Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto (UDMA) which advocated for Algerian independence within a federal French system. With his eight-year association with the French far-right at an end, Bentami was able to quickly align himself with Abbas and regain his status as an influential figure in the Mostaganem region.[422] The fluidity of such a political career makes it difficult to discern the sincerity of Bentami's convictions, or the precise reasons why he stayed on with the French right for so long. But his ability to present himself alternatively as a French nationalist, a protector of Algerian interests, and as a mediator for authorities demonstrates how his practical political engagements allowed him to cross between the political categories typically employed by historians to understand interwar and wartime Algeria. A close look at one of Bentami's key speeches on behalf of the PPF sheds light on how it was possible to rhetorically situate himself in-between the more common Algerian political platforms.[423]

Bentami, like all the PPF's Algerian speakers, had the challenging task of speaking to multiple audiences: Algerians looking for reforms and respect and French Algerians

422 Ibid., G.G. Algérie, Cabinet, Service des Liaisons Nord-Africains, N. 438, 4 May, 1955, "Notice individuelle".

423 For a full text of the speech, see *Le Pionnier*, "Rapport du Docteur D. Bentami", pp. 3-4, 24 November 1938. Consulted at ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 4I/24.

protective of their interests and status. In his November 1938 speech at the 2nd PPF Algerian Congress, Bentami both emphatically affirmed his French identity and the necessity of maintaining French colonial sovereignty while also criticizing various elements of colonial policy. One of his central arguments was that the concept of a "Muslim policy" was harmful for two reasons. The first was that any specific policy, be it "Catholic", "Protestant", or even of "free-thought" must in reality be a "French" policy placing national interests above all else. But this was not simply a means of asserting French nationalism. Bentami quickly asserted the totally independent basis of Muslim authority:

> It is truly a heresy from our perspective as believers to give the qualifying term "Muslim" to laws, decrees, and rules that have nothing to do with the Muslim faith. Muslim politics is entirely contained in the Qurʾan. Its expanse, limits, modalities, and principals are those that the Holy Book precisely determines...It is a grave error to continue to confuse the temporal and spiritual, and all this in the name of so-called "secular" [laiques] regimes.

And to conclude, he expanded on these ideas:

> As much as any others, if not more, the Muslim population is profoundly attached, as you all know, African comrades, to its traditions. There can be nothing here that stops his emancipation, and France would have been able to successfully conclude its mission, if, as paradoxical as it seems, it had not in some regards had a "Muslim policy" literally opposed to the dogma of Islam. Whereas France applies the separation of Church and State, here in Algeria an incomprehensible attitude is adopted, a source of profound and grave troubles to which we have perhaps not sufficiently taken into account. It is necessary to boldly and without delay give to Muslims the ability to organize and direct their religion [culte]; to organize everywhere their places of worship, to allow them to administer habus properties, to control the use of these resources, and to avoid their alienation; it is necessary in sum to respect the laws of Islam.

Here Bentami touched upon a point critical to Algerian reforms for decades: the particular application of the 1905 Separation of Church and State law in Algeria. As Raberh Achi has shown, the French Algerian administration had no desire to respect such a separation and

thereby cede its longstanding political and surveillance powers over Islamic organizations and events. The administration therefore altered the law in its Algerian application to allow for continued French control over fields ranging from subsidies for local Imams to authorizations for Qurʾanic schooling.[424] The ʿUlema reformist movement in particular highlighted this non-application of the spirit of the 1905 law as a critical point of contention with French rule. Though it was not unusual for an Algerian reform program to demand a fair application of the 1905 law, Bentami making such claims in a large hall full of devoted supporters of French sovereignty is striking. After all, for French Algerians the whole purpose of continued political control over Islam was to prevent Islam from turning into an anti-colonial force. By calling for true religious freedom in such a setting, Bentami was then pushing the PPF's discourse of respect for Islam to its limits: would a party dedicated to maintaining French sovereignty allow for religious freedom if it felt its own sovereignty threatened? For the moment at least, Bentami hoped to see if his partnership with the far-right could secure one of the longstanding goals of Algerian reformists.

Bentami was not only calling for the restitution of Muslim control over their affairs, but also for the end of legal structures that differentiated groups based on religion. The three main examples Bentami cited were the Cremieux Decree that established a legal difference between Muslims and Jews by making the latter full French citizens, the *code de l'indigénat* that placed Algerians under a permanent state of legal exception, and the unequal wages Algerians earned compared to Europeans in both factories and

424 Raberh Achi, "L'Algérie colonial ou la confrontation inaugurale de la laïcité avec l'islam", in *L'Histoire de l'Algérie à la période coloniale*, pp. 206-209.

bureaucracies. With regard to wage inequality, Bentami countered the typical settler arguments of differences in productivity by stating that Algerians could not be as productive when the state did so little to educate, train, and nourish. As a result, the need for wage equality necessitated a much broader reform of societal structures.

The Congress also included a clearly staged conversion event, in which a young Algerian, Foudil Larabi, dramatically announced his decision to join the party in front of a large audience. Larabi was an important catch for the PPF: he was well educated in French and Arabic, and had political experience as a founding member of the Etoile Nord-Africaine.[425] The new PPF convert referenced his ENA past by admitting he had been involved in several political movements which had all ended in disappointment. Feeling aimless and without direction, Larabi ascribed his political reawakening to the voice of Doriot in terms that clearly acknowledged the role of a charismatic leader in providing a purpose to life.[426] According to French intelligence, Larabi quickly got to work on a Muslim section for the Algiers Branch of the PPF, with the particular goal of detaching urban Algerian workers from the leftist CGT.[427]

Though Larabi seems to have drifted into the PPF through dissatisfaction with the alternatives, he was quick to pick up the rightist world-view. In a series of articles for the PPF's North African paper, *Le Pionnier*, Larabi outlined the role of Algerians in a French empire run under the PPF's principles. In his description of the ideal imperial structure,

425 Ageron, "Les populations du Maghreb", p. 23.
426 *Le Pionnier*, "L'adhésion de Foudil", p. 4, 24 November 1938.
427 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 4I/24, "Renseignement: Action du P.P.F. parmi les employés des T.A.", 16 January 1939.

Larabi appears to have been inspired by the morphological view of world cultures made popular by Spengler. According to the influential German pessimist, every culture has an idea that determines its flowering and eventual decay.[428] Following the German philosopher's main claim, Larabi argued that the European French and Mediterranean Islamic cultures represented organic units that should grow naturally. The goal of imperialism should be the co-operation between these cultures, such that each would "attain the plenitude of their strength". Drawing further from rightist vocabulary, Larabi argued that the PPF imperial doctrine followed "logically, inexorably [fatalement]", and could be summed up as an imperial community of separate units, with opportunities for organic sharing: "Each of the units [Algerian and French], evolving freely in harmonious parallel, will find suitable elements, elements that the nature of their constitutions can easily assimilate, and which will be imposed by their personalities. In this way, collaboration will be maintained and kept by a well-understood sense of common interest and the community will be guaranteed by mutual comprehension and reciprocal esteem."[429] Such an analysis also led Larabi to fault Jews and foreigners for fomenting discord between Muslims and the French. In his view, Jews did not form an organic unit of their own, and so risked corrupting those around them. If these "intermediary elements

428 Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West, Volume I: Form and Actuality*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York, 1927), pp. 3-50.

429 This is a Spenglerian notion of cultural borrowing, which asserts that one culture does not influence others, but rather that the borrowing culture chooses to appropriate for its own needs. Only the form of the borrowed element remains, the content is new and shaped by the central "idea" of the borrowing culture; Spengler, *The Decline of the West, Volume II: Perspectives of World-History*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York, 1928), pp. 55-60.

that clutter the way" were removed, a true policy of association could follow.[430] Larabi's quick grasp of rightist thinking demonstrates that at least some Algerians in the PPF took the potential alliance with the nationalist right seriously.

Both Bentami and Larabi demonstrated how a strong commitment to the right could lead to a solid understanding of what the French right desired while maintaining interpretations that could benefit Algerians and North Africans, possibly against entrenched colonial interests. Each would continue in their leadership positions into World War II, as Larabi left Algeria with Bentami in 1942 for the national PPF Congress. Yet despite the presence of one of the two at most major PPF meetings, and their many speeches, often in Arabic, attracting Algerians to the PPF proved to be a difficult task.

As a result, the PPF sought to change tack and appeal to rural Algerians as well as those who were politically engaged in cities. With this in mind Jean Fossati and Larabi came to Algiers to visit Shaykh Mustapha Kassimi, the head of the al-Rahamaniyya confraternity in El Hamel, and his cousin Abdelkader Kassimi. The reformist ʿUlema strongly opposed figures like the Kassimis, who they believed to represent a corrupted form of Islam too beholden to French interests. The Kassimis fought back, with Abdelkader editing a journal, *al-Rashad*, that attacked the ʿUlema.[431] Perhaps the PPF believed an alliance with the ʿUlema was unlikely, and hoped to work with Muslims without such strong aspirations to national independence. Though Mustapha excused himself from

430 AN-P, F/60/725, *Le Pionnier*, 1 January, 1939.

431 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, F. 1939, Préfecture d'Alger, C.I.E., "La politique indigène dans le départment d'Alger au début de 1939".

politics due to old age, he allowed Abdelkader to work with the PPF, deeming it during World War II to be the party that best represented Pétain's vision. The PPF tried to use Abelkader's adhesion as a propaganda victory, but the French authorities were not too worried, since Abdelkader was deemed an opportunist with little standing.[432] During the war, Mustapha would try to work with the regime to bolster his influence.[433] His PPF associations may have served as proof of his dedication to France. The PPF also recruited Shaykh Mohamed Zouani, a competitor for head of the al-Amariyya confraternity, which, according to the exaggerating PPF officials, had 400,000 members across the Islamic world. In reality, the confraternity was fractured and according to French intelligence was of little import, only finding recruits among the poor [le bas peuple].[434] In a meeting between Zouani and Doriot in March 1942 on the Prophet's birthday, Mawlid, Zouani emphasized the importance of France in protecting Muslims from atheistic communism. At the end of the ceremony, Doriot became an honorary member of the confraternity.[435] Around the same time, Zouani, along with other Algerian figures met with Cardinal Alfred-Henri-Marie Baudrillart to discuss the necessity of a Muslim-Christian alliance against communism. French intelligence wondered what Doriot's plan was, since other Shaykhs contested Zouani's title as head of the al-Amariyya confraternity, and the other Algerian

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432 Ibid., "L'activité indigène dans le department d'Alger", May 1940, October 1941.
433 Ibid., September 1941.
434 Ibid., August 1941, June 1941.
435 ANOM, Algérie, Department d'Alger, 4I/24, *Le Pionnier*, "La fête du prophète et l'union des musulmans avec la France".

PPF leaders were either "crooks" or nationalists seeking independence. "Is the PPF blind or stupid?" wondered a French intelligence officer.[436]

Nevertheless, Doriot and Fossati continued to push for an alliance with rural Algerians, hoping to bring two to three hundred Algerian delegates as well as the prominent moderate Algerian leader and effective rural mediator Muhammad Salah Bendjelloul to their November 1942 Congress.[437] The French North African governor-generals hoped to limit this number significantly, though Fossati believed the Algerian governor-general Yves Châtel would acquiesce in the end.[438] Unlike the earlier Vichy governors, Châtel sought the support of the PPF, and ignored the advice of intelligence officials wary of Algerian activists in order to pursue a friendlier policy towards Algerians.[439] Perhaps Châtel hoped to outbid the Germans for Algerian support. Whatever the case, Châtel's opposition to the French Algerian administration led him to rely on the PPF's networks of Algerians. And despite the fact that Abdelkader was still working his connections with local Muslim institutions to raise support for the PPF in the summer of 1942[440], the PPF's play for rural influence fell far short of expectations.

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436 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 1K/72, *Emancipation Nationale*, "Alliance des religions contre le bolchevisme", 28 March 1942.

437 It is possible that Bendjelloul saw the PPF as a potential means to closer relations with the regime, which he reached out to in a meeting with Châtel in August 1941. ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, Préfecture d'Alger, "L'activité indigène dans le départment d'Alger", August 1941. A year later, Bendjelloul was clearly frustrated with the lack of reforms, sending a letter to Pétain and Laval. "L'activité indigène dans le départment d'Alger", September 1942.

438 AN-P, 3W/134 Microfiche, Dossier Yves Châtel, T.A. N. 8714/61 "Activités P.P.F.-Demande d'aide et de renseignements au destinataire-Relations", 27 October 1942.

439 Ibid., "Note sur l'activité de M. Canavaggio"

440 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger 1K/72, N. 3944 Police Speciale Départmentale "Gacem Mohamed et Omani Ramdane", 4 June 1942.

Despite Larabi's claim that the PPF had three thousand Algerian members in late 1940, this number was probably significantly lower.[441] Understanding the numerical participation of Algerians in the PPF is rather difficult. Overall membership in the party fluctuated in the late 1930s, and the Vichy Regime, though sympathetic to elements of PPF ideology, was suspicious of its political activity and sought to limit its influence, thus driving down membership. Claims made by PPF members, such as Larabi, must not be taken too seriously. Furthermore, party lists of adherents and French police lists also pose problems. Some Algerians joined out of curiosity toward a new political movement, while French intelligence officers claimed that many others joined out of pressure from bosses and landowners. Thus, the numbers cannot tell us the level of commitment made by these PPF members, and whether those who adhered maintained any sort of lasting relationship with the party. A list of PPF members in Algiers from 1942 shows 94 Algerian members out of a total of 424, or 22% of the local section. About half were day laborers or employees who may have been pushed into enrollment. The other half consisted of small shop owners or those engaged in local trades, particularly chauffeuring. Algerian participation in PPF meetings during the war was low, and sparked concern among PPF leaders. Perhaps some members had quickly lost faith in the party platform or ability to carry out reform, while others had never intended to be involved. For example, in early 1938, a group of thirty Algerian members of the Médéa section, including two in local leadership positions, announced their demission in a letter sent to the socialist paper, *La Lutte Sociale*. The two

441Ibid., N. 1.892 C.I.E. "Fodil Larabi et P.P.F.", 21 December 1940.

important reasons for their renouncement was the PPF's demand that Algerians vote in a separate electoral college, and that there was no program to drastically change the "feudal colonialism" under which most Algerians suffered.[442]

THE PPF'S PRO-ALGERIAN POLITICS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Certainly, these former members, who hoped to assimilate while remaining Muslim, came to understand what PPF policies would actually mean if implemented. The PPF did not offer much beyond certain social and cultural protections, amounting to a certain "protected" status for Algerians within the French imperial state. Yet as we have seen with Arrighi's critique of colons and Bentami's speech, PPF discourse often flirted with more radical ideas. As a result, the PPF helped to normalize certain positions while opening up a space in which Algerians could attempt to appropriate PPF discourse and practices for their own ends. That Doriot's desire to recruit substantial numbers of Algerians was a failure is clear. But there were still moments of interaction between Algerian radicals and the PPF that should be studied. For those Algerians who were frustrated at the failure of the Popular Front to enact even limited reforms, a party dedicated to a charismatic leader and engaged in a radical critique of French society and political institutions must have raised considerable curiosity. Despite being a nationalist party that hoped to stifle anti-French sentiments, the PPF provided more maneuverability for Algerian radicals.

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442 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 4I/24, *La Lutte Sociale*, "Les Musulmans contre le P.P.F.", 21 May 1938.

By attempting to satisfy certain Algerian demands in order to forestall Algerian nationalist sentiment, the PPF ended up undermining a French colonial order that could hardly provide needed social services. In the city of Blida, the local PPF leader sought to gain Algerian adherents by teaching illiterates how to read and write. [443] The recruiter, Ameur Mohamed, was a working-class painter, a former communist and son of a French officer, and taught a course on militancy twice a week for the PPF's Blida youth group.[444] The PPF also exposed some Algerians to rightist social prescriptions, as in a 1937 meeting on corporatism in which seven of the ten participants were Algerians.[445] In 1941, the sub-prefect of Mascara threatened to send Henri Allegre, a PPF member, to a concentration camp for inciting Algerian distillery workers against their boss.[446] Allegre had talked to these workers at a café, inquiring into their wages and possible mistreatment.[447] Even after the Allied occupation of North Africa, the PPF militant Henri Jean Wallimann encouraged his comrades to make contact with young PPA members in order to organize resistance.[448]

These examples show some of the ways that local PPF actors sought to build bridges to work with Algerians. According to French police, who were very keen on determining the Algerian reaction to rightist overtures, the responses varied. The Oran chef

443 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Alger, 1K/72, N. 7602, 14 June 1937.
444 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Alger, 41/24, "Syndicalisme", 30 November 1937.
445 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Oran, //84, N. 3485, "Réunion de la S/Section d'Oran-Berthelot", 15 April 1937.
446 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Oran, //29, N. 4419 "Activité des Partis Politiques", 18 September 1941.
447 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Oran, //29, N. 52/4 "Rapport", 15 May 1941.
448 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Algerie, 1K/72, N. 2331 "Activité P.P.F.", 14 May 1943.

de sûreté noted that in a meeting at Bou Sfer, the two hundred Algerians out of three hundred in attendance were clearly brought there by their employers, and failed to applaud or respond at all to a speech in Arabic given by Zine Bentabet criticizing the Popular Front.[449] At times, the resistance shifted from passive to active. In a March 1939 meeting of the PPF's Muslim section of Sidi-Bel-Abbès, an Algerian counter-speaker challenged the PPF's positions, claiming that they would prefer Algeria to be administered locally by incompetent and uneducated Frenchmen rather than capable and well-trained Algerians. Furthermore, their claims to be pure French were belied by the fact that many local PPF members were naturalized Spaniards with more loyalty to Franco than to France. The rhetoric of Latinity apparently made it hard for some Algerians to take French right-wing nationalism seriously. Finally, the Algerian speaker asserted in Arabic that "Islam, whose refined civilization has shone on the world, has not fallen so low that the ex-communist Doriot can pretend to raise it by his bestowal of miserable bags of grain!" The main PPF speaker did not know how to respond while the Algerians in attendance applauded his challenger.[450]

Perhaps the most intriguing interaction was that between the PPF and PPA members. Since the PPA had been established by Messali Hadj in Paris as an Algerian movement intimately connected to the PCF, it is common to trace the history of the PPA

449 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Algerie, //84, N. 2.982, "Réunion à Bou Sfer", 24 March 1937.

450 AN-P, F/60/725, *Oran Republicain*, "A propos de la dernière réunion du P.P.F. de Sidi-Bel-Abbes", 27 March 1939. The PPF speaker in question was Félix Roquefère, who we have seen in a disagreement with Arrighi over the French colons' payments towards Algerian manual labor.

and its influence on the post-war Front de Libération Nationale as one partly determined by the original form shaped by communist notions of organization and militancy. This raises the question of the PPF's possible influence in normalizing and encouraging the PPA's move towards an intransigent and exclusive nationalism that separated it so clearly from the more moderate Algerian reform parties. In the late 1930s, the basis for PPA support came from younger, urban Algerians working as small tradesmen and in petty commerce. As Omar Carlier has demonstrated, this political constituency was eager to find political alternatives to traditional parties, while also engaging in an emotionally-driven public participation. Yet the failure of the Popular Front to deliver reforms brought much disappointment, with many PPA members and sympathizers rejecting democracy and embracing a secretive and instrumental form of politics.[451] Given the PPA's characteristics, the rightist PPF must have been an intriguing curiosity. Here was a party that tried to recruit from similar working-class social circles, critiqued French democracy, the communist party, and engaged in its own secretive politics to avoid government suppression. Despite the fact that the PPF's prioritization of protecting the French Empire was at direct odds with the PPA's Algerian nationalism, there existed a mutual interest. A closer look at how the PPF and PPA interacted in local situations will help clarify the similarities and differences between the two radical parties.

The PPF itself tried to reach out to the PPA when the latter came under attack from communists. During the late 1930s, the communist line on French colonialism softened

451 Omar Carlier, *Entre nation et jihad* (Paris, 1995), pp. 36-38, 56-57, 69-70.

considerably. The same anti-Fascist coalition that led to the Popular Front also meant that for communists, a reformed colonialism had to be maintained for the sake of the security of a France acting as a bulwark against Germany and Italy. Thus, in the minds of communists, the radical demands of Hadj and the PPA threatened to play into the hands of the fascists who promised Arabs independence in exchange for help in dismantling the "plutocratic" empires.[452] In an article in *Le Pionnier*, the PPF acknowledged its concerns regarding the Algerian nationalism of the PPA, but attacked the Popular Front and communist figures for rigging an election to ensure Hadj lost, causing his arrest, and looking the other way at his mistreatment in prison. The author concluded: "Ah, if the PPA was not only anti-communist but also pro-French, how we would wish it good luck!"[453] Furthermore, the article represented a general party line, as PPF orators often brought up similar points. The PPF even backed two sympathizers of Messali's party for municipal elections in November 1938 in Algiers against the communist and socialist candidates.[454] By portraying the communists and an Algerian administration beholden to the Popular Front as the primary enemies of the PPA, the PPF hoped to become the sole mediator between radical Algerians and France.

The PPF aroused both curiosity and anger from the PPA. About fifty young and poor Algerians, many of whom were reported to be involved in "extremist circles" attended

452 Drew, *We are no longer in France*, pp. 99-105.
453 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Alger, 4I/24, *Le Pionnier*, "Le Front Populaire et Messali", 11 November 1938.
454 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, F. 1939, Préfecture d'Alger, C.I.E. "La politique indigène dans le département d'Alger au début de 1939" pp. 6-7.

a PPF meeting in Blida to learn about Doriot's proposal for a Muslim electoral college.[455] In a 1938 meeting in Tiaret in which Doriot was present, a report sent to the prefect estimated that the majority of the 100 to 150 Algerians in attendance were PPA members. Yet, when Doriot explained that the policy of association could be likened to living in the same house without sharing the same bed, a young Algerian challenged him, replying that "the French take the bed, and the Arab must content himself with the rug", at which point he was expelled from the room. Needless to say, the incident did not make a good impression on the PPA members.[456] At another meeting, three of the forty Algerians in attendance, all "known for their commitment to the PPA", refused to take off their hats to sing the Marseillaise. Some PPA members clearly participated in PPF events as critical observers, trying to learn about the party's platform, and where it fit into the quickly changing political constellation of late 1930s Algeria.[457]

One Algerian informant for a French intelligence service reported on why some PPA members sought a rapprochement with the PPF during the early period of World War II. By initiating contacts with the PPF, these Algerians hoped to push the PPF to attack the leader of the influential ʿUlema movement, Shaykh al-ʿUqbi, for being too soft on the Jewish community. The PPF would be happy to pursue any anti-Semitic leads, while the French administration would become more suspicious of a figure they hoped to work with. Since the PPF under Vichy was the only political party with any ability to operate publicly,

455 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Alger, 4I/24, "Le P.P.F. et les Indigènes", 29 March 1938.
456 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Oran, //84, "Réunion que Doriot a donnée à Tiaret le 12 courant", 18 May 1938.
457 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Alger, 41/24, "Réunions publiques", 27 January 1938.

some PPA members could continue to play a wily political game aimed at destabilizing French rule. The officer in Algiers who received the report was familiar with the PPA's clever use of French far-rightists, noting that "Already before the war, a certain number of PPA militants adhered to the PPF or the PSF in order to 'cover themselves' against the suspicions of the authorities, while at the same time taking lessons in organization."[458] Such was the case of an Algerian arrested in Azazga for speaking out against France in September 1939; apparently proof of PPF membership did not constitute a get out of jail free card.[459] As a result of the PPF opening up this (admittedly limited) space for radical Algerian politics, Pétain's delegate to North Africa, General Maxime Weygand, ordered the governors of French North Africa to crack down on political groups, and to particularly limit the PPF's appeals and "demagogic propaganda" directed at Algerians.[460]

THE FAR-RIGHT AND ALGERIANS IN FRANCE

And yet the far-rightist campaign to appeal to Algerians continued in Nazi-occupied Paris, where a sizeable community of North African immigrant workers constituted a tempting target. It was here that Hadj originally began his political career, and it was in the working-class suburb of Saint-Denis that Doriot had built his political citadel. Yet the PPF

458 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 1K/72, "Action du P.P.F. auprès des musulmans", 16 December 1940. Other Algerians had less political uses for French far-rightist parties. In late 1942, eleven Muslims agreed to become members of the Parti Franciste if they could gain permission to travel to France in order to find work. The Algiers Franciste head, Eugène Evenet was in favor as long as the Algerians in question paid a bribe of 170 to 500 francs. ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 41/24, C.I.E., N. 1339, "Francisme", 2 October 1942.

459 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, Préfecture d'Alger, "L'activité indigène dans le départment d'Alger", p. 8, September 1939.

460 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 1K/72, N. 2.941, "Activité des partis politiques en Afrique du Nord", 7 June 1941.

was not the only rightist group at work in immigrant and working-class Paris. Pierre Constantini, the leader of the collaborationist group La Ligue Française, sought to make contact with North Africans in Paris. By the spring of 1942, the increasing stakes of World War II inflamed the rhetoric and promises that such campaigns entailed. In a meeting of the Ligue's North African Section, Ramdani, Constantini's former chauffeur and head of the section, called for the full legal equality of Muslims, as well as the "total elimination of Jews and of Anglo-Saxon capitalists". [461] Next Muhammad Masri, a professor of theology at the University of Cairo, explained how the Ligue possessed the only French political doctrine compatible with that of Islam. Constantini then described how the geographical position of North Africa would determine the outcome of the war, before beginning a long appeal to the North Africans in attendance. Not only was Islam "the most powerful force in the universe", but the current "world revolution" was a repetition of Muhammad's struggle against the Jews. Following these broad claims, Constantini looked to a shared history between the French and Muslims that went back to a Napoleon remembered as an Islamophile. Finally, the religious divide could be overcome, as Constantini argued that the Qurʾan itself calls Christianity the closest religion to Islam.[462]

French intelligence did not make too much of these recruiting efforts, since most members were said to have joined as a sign of gratitude to French rightists who had found them jobs. Though Doriot and Constantini often spoke publicly together at this time, their

461 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 4I/24, N. 381, "Action des groupements français sur les nord africains à Paris", 18 April 1942.

462 Ibid., N. 849 CIE/1, "La Ligue francaise", 12 June 1942.

organizations showed little co-operation, as they competed with each other for North African adherents. Furthermore, an attempt by PPA members to infiltrate the group had failed, once again demonstrating how rightist organizations were seen as potential areas in which Algerian nationalists could throw around their political weight.[463] Though one report suggested that their North African membership reached 2,000 by early 1942, this figure appears to be inflated, certainly with regard to active participation.

Yet some Algerians, like Bentami and Larabi in the PPF, had a much more long-standing and deeper relationship with the right. The most notable was Mohamed el-Maadi, a naturalized officer born in 1902 to an Algerian qaʿid and French mother. Though his political experience began in the Etoile Nord-Africain, el-Maadi soon began to identity himself with the right. An avid reader of the right-wing press and a member of the Action Française living in a hotel run by a PSF member, el-Maadi soon made connections with the radical French right that would provide him with a series of rather dubious projects until the end of World War II.[464] At first, he was arrested by the police as a suspected member of the Cagoule, a small clique of insurrectionary rightists who engaged in assassinations and destruction of property from 1936-1937 to create the climate necessary for a reactionary coup. El-Maadi declared he had been given 15,000 francs to recruit 350 men for an imminent operation.[465] With the start of the war, el-Maadi hoped to act as a mediator between the French right, the Nazis, and North African nationalists. An attempt

463 Ibid., N. 381, 18 April 1942.
464 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 1K/38, Dir. SGA to Préfet d'Alger, 28 October 1937.
465 Philippe Bourdrel, *La Cagoule, 30 ans de complots* (Paris, 1970), p. 213.

to convince Hadj of the necessity of collaboration was a failure. Yet his contacts with the Cagoule's founder, Eugène Deloncle, continued, and he also remained associated with the renegade socialist Marcel Déat. Through these influential collaborators, el-Maadi gained enough trust with the Germans to help organize the North-African Brigade, a unit of a few hundred North Africans recruited in the same Parisian working-class district used by Zola as the setting for *L'Assommoir*. After being engaged in a few anti-partisan operations, the Brigade was caught in an ambush in which most perished. With the fall of France, el-Maadi escaped to Germany before eventually finding a safe haven in Egypt where he died in the early 1950s.[466]

But el-Maadi's involvement with the right should not automatically lead us to believe he was unsympathetic to many of the claims made by radical Algerian activists. In a long report on "The social and material situation of North-African indigènes" given during the 1941 Congress of Déat's Rassemblement nationale populaire, el-Maadi delivered a scathing critique of French colonial society. An analysis of his report will allow us to see how el-Maadi could position himself as an uncompromising critic of the French colonial status while maintaining his close ties to the French right.

El-Maadi warned of the French false sense of complacency and deliberate attempt to mythologize Algeria, declaring that the "lazy and negative patriotism that lacks courage and initiative…is finished", and that the "false speeches, the memory of banquets held in honor of the Algerian Centenary, the memory of the belly dances of the Colonial

466 Faligot and Kauffer, *Le Croissant et la Croix Gammée*, pp. 123-132.

Exposition, will not impede the truth from coming out". Without a "conquest of the hearts", the French would soon see the Algerians rightfully rebel. Yet any attempt by North Africans to demand or suggest the smallest reform always led to immediate rejection and a general outcry. According to el-Maadi, the burgeoning Algerian political parties did not seek independence as so many claimed, but merely reforms that France should have delivered long ago. Colonial defenders were mistaken when they commonly attributed strikes and social disorder to foreign powers rather than to the miserable conditions of Algerian life. As a result of French inaction, this Algerian social condition was "horrifying…The mass of indigènes, composed of dispossessed fellahs and impoverished artisans, wanders, starving, on the outskirts of cities." El-Maadi's list of demanded reforms included an abolition of the laws of exception, obligatory bilingual education, an increase in North African participation in the administration, the full application of all metropolitan social laws in North Africa, the amnesty of all political prisoners, and the implementation of a vast development program for the North African countryside.

Given how critical el-Maadi was of the French colonial lobby, and by implication, the majority of supporters of nationalist parties in North Africa, how could he hope to forge a common bond with the fascist right in France? His anti-semitism was a start, as he blamed Jews for certain abuses in colonial society, such as usurious interest rates, corrupt administrative figures, and the misleading promises of the Popular Front. One of his demands was therefore the expulsion of Jews from North Africa and the redistribution of their property to fellahs. Yet he did not see the Jews as entirely responsible, and shifted his

language where appropriate from “the Jews” to the deliberately vague “one”, or “they”, when referring to conservative French colonialists.

El-Maadi also nuanced his critic of French faults by highlighting certain positives: the establishment of law and order as opposed to inter-tribal violence, the *mise en valeur* of uncultivated land, the establishment of roads, hospitals, ports, and dams, and the introduction of French culture. Despite asserting that North Africans had not enjoyed the benefits of these advantages, el-Maadi’s admiration of French accomplishments demonstrated his willingness to remain within the French colonial narrative, albeit with a critical eye. His rightist credentials also gave him impressive leeway from a Vichy government that had arrested many Algerian nationalists, particularly from the PPA. When he visited Algeria to research an article that would attack the French Algerian administration, Governor Châtel’s secretary Canavaggio pleaded with him to tone down his rhetoric and take into account Châtel’s differences with administrators. El-Maadi complied by softening his language and speaking positively of the governor.[467] According to Canavaggio, el-Maadi impressed Châtel, who allegedly spoke of the ambitious Algerian as “a courageous and seductive, but still loyal man”.[468]

Perhaps most interestingly, el-Maadi sought collaboration with the French fascists by sharing popular notions of geopolitical units. He stated that “North Africa, by its geographic position, by its geological formation, is European. Let us make of it an

467 AN-P, 3W/134 Microfiche, Dossier Yves Châtel, “Déclarations de Monsieur Canavaggio Ferdinand”, pp. 9-10, 24 December 1942.
468 Ibid., “Questions complementaires posées en marge”, 28 December 1942.

extension of European France." El-Maadi was careful not to distinguish too neatly among Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, since he viewed North Africa as an organic sub-unit that ideally existed within the larger European space. This unity was constituted by "a common physiognomy: the orographic form, the climate, the products, the nature of the populations, their history, customs, religion; all this calls forth unity." Only a party that understood this unity could enact a "just" North African policy. For el-Maadi, this shared history was very much a tragic one, in which "we are, very simply, from East to West, from Tunis to Marrakech, a Mediterranean people who for two millennia, have been successively dominated by Carthage, Rome, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, and the French." Yet these conquering forces had at least given North Africa access to civilization which the French were now trying to deny. By calling for North African unity, el-Maadi gave voice to certain North Africans who had advocated the unity of the Maghreb, as Hadj's ENA did from time-to-time in the mid- 1930s. Yet this common space belonged to a larger trans-Mediterranean unity dominated by Europe. As a result, el-Maadi placed himself, and Maghrebi unity within the fascist conception of Eurafrica as a possible unified political space in which regional cultures could defend themselves military, politically, and culturally.[469] In the spring of 1943, with the Allies in control of North Africa, el-Maadi expanded on the importance of Muslims for the success of any "Eurafrica" political project in a book, *L'Afrique du Nord: Terre d'histoire*, published by France-Empire.

469 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Alger, 4I/24, N. 408, "Activité politique à Paris", 15 July 1941.

The central purpose of the book was to suggest exactly what European-Muslim cooperation would look like. The first step was to integrate North Africa's Arab and Berber population into the narrative of European history. According to el-Maadi, "the Arabo-Berbers who occupied Spain and Southern France for centuries, are without a doubt, responsible for [à l'origine de] modern European civilization".[470] Despite this initial challenge to popular European narratives,[471] el-Maadi quickly mimicked nineteenth century French depictions of Algeria by portraying Africa as a largely empty, uncultivated land with significant untapped resources. The advance of Europe into Africa was an inevitable "destiny".[472] Africa, as the fascist Eurafricanists had argued, would serve as an open geopolitical space in which Europe could channel its energies and send its excess populace, thus providing a common project upon which to build a unified Europe. But the role of North Africans in these schemes had always been relegated to a footnote. For el-Maadi, it was precisely North Africans that would make the whole project work.

As el-Maadi was aware of, Eurafrica planners were cognizant of the problems in exporting European populations to Equatorial Africa. Indeed, this obstacle was one of the topics addressed in the Italian's 1937 International Congress on Africa. The answer was clear for el-Maadi: it would not be Europeans colonizing Equatorial Africa, but Arabs and Berbers. The settler/soldier myth would be taken up by an Arab/Berber race and Islamic

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470 Mohamed El-Maadi, *L'Afrique du Nord: Terre d'histoire* (Paris, 1943), p. 9.

471 For example, Henri Pirenne's thesis that the Islamic conquests broke the unity of the Mediterranean world and brought Europe to its lowest economic point. Pirenne outlined these ideas in the 1920s, and expanded upon them in 1937 with *Mohammed and Charlemagne*.

472 El-Maadi, *L'Afrique du Nord,* p. 13.

culture perfectly suited for the historic role.[473] In a twist, el-Maadi re-elaborated the settler defense line of the French General Thomas-Roger Bugeaud, infamous for his brutal tactics in the conquest of Algeria. Before attempting to lower the risk of rebellion by fixing Algerians to the land, Bugeaud had hoped that mass French colonization of the country would form a wall protecting the French community from Algerian raids, and freeing French soldiers for continental duty.[474] Now el-Maadi positioned Algerians as the new settler line of defense, this time along the Sahara. Thus, the North-Africans could play a key role in the grand European geo-political project. An anti-capitalist and anti-Bolshevik Europe free of Jews could only function peacefully if Western Europe had its own zone of imperialism to compliment German eastward expansion. Yet, the hinge to the entire Eurafrica project was the North African population. And while such schemes may appear absurd given the Axis' state of siege, the skill of el-Maadi in negotiating fascist ideology, discourse, and geopolitical assumptions is a revealing demonstration of how the most racist, exclusivist ideas could be appropriated by marginalized actors.

CONCLUSION

The world of Algerian politics was heavily fractured during the late 1930s, and the PPF hoped it could find a platform capable of drawing in Algerian adherents and sympathizers. In hindsight, their attempt appears rather naïve; yet it was one of the critical party projects in Algeria. Just about every meeting and comprehensive speech touched on

473 Ibid., pp. 18-20. El-Maadi also pointed out that similar ideas had already been suggested by French officials, like the General Paul Azan. pp. 182-183.

474 Antony Thrall Sullivan, *Thomas-Robert Bugeaud, France and Algeria, 1784-1849: Politics, Power, and the Good Society* (Hamden, 1983), pp. 94-116.

“indigène question”, often at length. In short, the PPF did not fail for a lack of effort, but for a fundamentally flawed political premise that Algerians would give up political and civic power in exchange for economic and cultural protection. The decision was made all the easier by the fact that the PPF had little chance of taking power and enacting its reforms. It instead appeared to be a mere tool to rally rightist French Algerians to maintain the colonial status-quo. At the same time, however, the PPF did open a space that saw curious Algerians studying a competitor, politically marginalized activists experimenting with an alternative movement, and conservative Algerians allying with the far-right to bring about their own brand of reform. In that sense, the PPF campaign to capture the hearts of Algerians was aided by their lack of power; by playing an insurgent role in French politics, the PPF would allow its Algerian followers to join them in attacks on the French administration, colonial practices, and religious policing, so long as these critiques were framed so as not to question French sovereignty. Once the French Algerian right did come to power under Vichy, it had to immediately face the backlash of failed expectations, as we will see in Chapter Five. But first, we will turn to the Italian efforts to gain Libyan loyalty through their own ideas of fascist-inspired governance.

Chapter Four: Governing Muslims I: Incorporating Libyans into the Fascist Mediterranean Empire

INTRODUCTION

In 1919, after eight years of political strife and military campaigns, the Italian occupation of the Libyan provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica had been limited to the coastal cities of Tripoli and Homs. The liberal governments of Vittorio Orlando and Francesco Nitti sought to come to an agreement with the self-proclaimed Tripolitanian Republic and with the Senussi Sufi order, led by Muhammad Idris. For the time, the Italian concessions to Libyan demands were stunning: the freedom of press and association were guaranteed, the Arabic language was to be given equal status to Italian, obligatory military service was abolished, and most importantly, both provinces could elect a majority Arab parliament with the power to set taxes. Yet by 1922, the compromise was falling apart, as tensions increased between Italian authorities and the tribes of Tripolitania, who were themselves engaged in constant infighting.[475] Furthermore, when the Tripolitanian Republic offered Muhammad Idris the title of Emir, the Italians feared the creation of a unitary Libyan state opposed to their interests. Even before the fascist march on Rome, liberal Italy began to assert its sovereignty through the conquest of several cities. With the unwavering political and military support of a fascist government, the total conquest of

475 For a detailed history of this brief period in Libyan history, see Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya: State Formation, Colonization, and Resistance* (Albany, 2009), pp. 124-136; and Angelo Del Boca, *Mohamed Fekini and the Fight to Free Libya*, trans. Antony Shugaar (New York, 2011), pp. 61-107.

Tripoli and Cyrenaica began to proceed apace in a series of conflicts that would last from 1923 to 1932.[476]

Yet once the fascists had imposed Italian sovereignty over Libya, they faced a difficult question. What would the role of Libyans be in a fascist Libya? The assimilationist model was out of the question, given the fascist contempt for civil liberties and their understanding of Libyan civilization as inferior to that of Italy. So was the federal system that the liberals had reluctantly consented to before undermining. Furthermore, as we have seen in Chapter One, Libya was to be a site of the historic unfolding of the Italian nation's narrative. What role could Libyans possibly have in the Italian re-discovery of their Roman past, or in the Italian use of Libya as a new frontier to send the unemployed and landless, or most ominously, in a space in which Italians would learn how to create a stronger race through the practice of commanding? From any fascist viewpoint, the Libyan role would have to be a subservient one. The early years of fascist rule in Libya bluntly reflected this, as the lapsed accords between local elites and the liberal government were not replaced with a new legal order until 1927. In the interim, Italy acted essentially outside of any established norms. Afterwards, Italy formally enshrined its direct rule, whereby a governor representing the metropole would rule over the colonies of Tripoli and Cyrenaica without intermediaries. Libyans were relegated to second-class status with respect to metropolitan Italians.[477] Further reforms in 1934 would combine Tripolitania and Cyrenaica into one colony consisting of four coastal provinces, with the southern territories ruled by the

476 Labanca, *Oltremare*, pp. 137-141.

477 Angelo Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Libia: Dal fascismo a Gheddafi* (Milan, 2010), pp. 121-123.

military. Finally, in 1939 the coastal provinces (Derna, Benghazi, Misurata, and Tripoli) were absorbed directly into the Italian state.[478] With the legal framework in place to secure total Italian control over Libya, the question of the role of Libyans remained.

The early years of fascist rule in Libya were draconian by any measure, as Italians executed combatants, bombed indiscriminately, and confiscated land and property. Yet domestic and international considerations forced the Italian fascists to offer some sort of positive definition of Libyans vis-à-vis the Italian nation, and why they were better off under Italian fascist rule. Domestically, such a vision aimed to co-opt and redirect anti-Italian nationalist and religious movements into depoliticized forms of civic and religious engagement, while internationally, it was critical to pose as friends of Arabs and Islam in order to open up space for political action elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Beyond the still common tools of repression, the central fascist strategies were threefold. The first was to integrate a small Libyan elite into fascist institutions while providing access to a form of privileged citizenship. Using a word popular with the regime, we can call this the *inquadramento* strategy, one that consisted of inserting citizens into state-run organizations while subsuming their individual interests into those of the state.[479] *Inquadramento* offered a fascist solution to the problem of colonial citizenship. In British and French colonies, debates over citizenship offered colonial subjects a chance to assert their rights and to find roles in governmental and administrative posts despite constant obstruction and the use of

478 Ibid., pp. 278-280.

479 Or as Philip Morgan has defined it, "something between organization and regimentation, with the sense of framing, enclosing, and integrating". Morgan, *Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945* (London, 2002), p. 128.

occasional violence in the name of maintaining colonial hegemony.[480] Yet fascist principles would brook no such opposition. As a result, new solutions had to be found to keep Libyans, particularly those living in the coastal cities, from political dissent. Italians hoped that slowly introducing Libyans to fascist institutions would inspire loyalty and consent.

The second strategy, connected to the refusal to grant the legal rights enjoyed by Italians, was to frame the rejection of assimilation as respect for Islamic traditions and culture. Italy could then present itself as a new model of colonial rule opposed to the so-called materialist universalism of liberal democracies and the Soviet Union. To this end, Italy openly adopted the doctrine of association that had gained increasing support from both French and British colonial administrators. Association stood in contrast to assimilation; it promised to maintain traditional hierarchies and social structures at the expense of the educated, Westernized elites. Advocates of association often looked to traditional local leaders to outsource colonial governance, although these leaders often formed a new class created by colonial administrators. Such a strategy would allegedly ease colonial subjects into modernity, and protect them from predatory Europeans while cutting costs and ensuring that European sovereignty was not challenged by European-educated urban elites.[481] For more benevolent Europeans, as Raoul Girardet put it,

480 Even in a site of bountiful colonial violence like French Mandate Syria, there was considerable room for negotiating what citizenship meant. See Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York, 2000).

481 Thomas, *The French empire between the wars*, pp. 54-83.

association demonstrated respect through the belief that "each culture taken in its uniqueness, studied for its originality, possesses its own value, its own riches."[482] In reality, as historians have shown, association and assimilation were never clearly distinct, as colonial practice was always fuzzier than theories of governance.[483] Since the Italians favored direct rule, their claims to association mostly rested on the protection of local religious beliefs and traditions. However, the Italian claim to protect Islam in Libya belied an attempt to depoliticize the religion and make it more amenable to Italian rule.

Finally, the Italians wished to make Libya appear to be a model colony. Libya itself was not much of an economic asset to Italy,[484] and served instead as a planned jumping-off point for expansion into Tunisia and possibly Egypt.[485] This meant that the regime had to carefully control the movement of Libyans living and travelling abroad. By limiting the damage of anti-Italian exiles and emigrants, and encouraging the movement of pro-Italian Libyans, Italy hoped to use the transnational movements of Libyans to their advantage.

This chapter will examine each of these strategies in turn, focusing on the opportunities and limitations of governing a colonial space using the fascist strategies of de-politicization through hierarchical political integration, strict control over the

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482 Girardet, *L'idée coloniale en France*, p. 161.

483 Thomas, *The French empire between the wars*, pp. 54-83; Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, 1997), pp. 5-10, 174-211.

484 Labanca, *Oltremare*, pp. 281-286.

485 Though as World War II approached, offensive plans in North Africa turned into a more realistic acceptance of the need to simply defend Libya. John Gooch, *Mussolini and his Generals: The Armed Forces and Fascist Foreign Policy, 1922-1940* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 355-358, 487-488.

movements of subjects, and the reification of tradition to counteract the dissolving tendencies of the modern processes of secularization, urbanization, and rationalization. In doing so, this chapter will examine questions of colonial citizenship, transnational networks and contacts, and the nature of the relationship between Islam and the Italian far-right.

A MENACE AND AN OPPORTUNITY: LIBYANS ABROAD

I. Policing Libyan Migrants

The Italian invasion and occupation of Libya greatly destabilized the country. As the initial war against the Ottomans turned into a struggle against the Senussi order during the World War, and then into a final Italian assault aiming at total control over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, many Libyans were displaced. Thousands left to find more stable economic employment, particularly in Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria, while others fled after years of armed resistance. In 1931, around thirty thousand Libyans were living abroad, with seven to eight thousand in Tunisia and Algeria, and twenty thousand in Egypt.[486]

The presence of so many Libyans abroad offered opportunities and dangers for Italian authorities. In the minds of many of those working in North Africa and the Middle East, the idea of a vaguely unified Arab and/or Islamic world[487] was taken seriously. Roberto Cantalupo, an Italian expert on Middle Eastern affairs, and the Legate to Cairo in

486 Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, p. 219.

487 The two terms are often used interchangeably in documents.

the early 1930s, viewed Islam as a temporarily stagnant force that still had great potential. Though Cantalupo recognized the divisions between Arab states, he believed that

> this purely accidental situation, subtly provoked by non-Muslim forces intent on dividing the Arabs to render them prone to economic manumission, does not rid us of the question of their future function with regard to a divided West and a sickly East. On the Indian trade routes there exist armed peoples, proud sultans and powerful sects. The Islam of the Indian Ocean can communicate with that of Syria and Mesopotamia by way of Yemen and the Hejaz. The Islamic cycles take place over continents.

According to Cantalupo, the individual forms of Arab nations could manifest themselves in a variety of ways, and Italy could only anchor itself solidly amid them all by remaining outside any conflicts internal to Islam.[488]

A functionary in the Consulate in Jedda echoed Cantalupo's thoughts a few years later, proclaiming that thanks to the divine nature of the Arabic language in Islamic culture, the

> European powers must be wary and circumspect in their relations with Muslims, because Arab journals are read throughout the Islamic world, and whatever the differences between sects and their mutual hostilities, an act committed against a part will have immediate and profound repercussions throughout the Muslim world... Islam is therefore a compact and homogenous whole despite its internal fissures and discordances. It is therefore necessary to consider it as a block even if one is in contact with a single part of it. This is so clearly true that if an Islamic grouping starts to become a Western nation, as in contemporary Turkey, it removes itself from Islam. The Turks do not come anymore to Mecca for the pilgrimage.[489]

Given this view of Islam as a unified culture sharing a broad historical destiny, it is no surprise that the Italians were particularly concerned with the ability of Libyans to spread

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488 Cantalupo, *L'Italia musulmana*, pp. 164-167, 245.

489 ASMAE, MAI Vol. 1, P. 91/22, F. Paesi arabi Periodo 1928-1935, N. 539, "Il Pellegrinaggio alla Meca dell'anno 1933, 13 April 1933.

word of Italian atrocities and maladministration in neighboring countries. Such fears seemed to be realized in the early 1930s, as the Italians resorted to extreme coercive measures in order to subjugate Cyrenaica. In a spectacular display of harshness aimed at preventing Eastern Libyans from aiding the resistance leader ʿUmar al-Mukhtar, Governor Pietro Badoglio and General Rodolfo Graziani oversaw the forced internment of one hundred thousand Libyans, constituting nearly half the population of Cyrenaica, in a series of camps placed in the desert of Sirtica. Between June 1930 and September 1933, forty thousand Libyans died in the camps, with a total death toll possibly reaching sixty thousand.[490] And in September 1931, the Italians hung the captured ʿUmar al-Mukhtar in one of the larger camps, inciting waves of public protests in Arab cities around the Mediterranean.[491]

As Anna Baldinetti has demonstrated, the substantial number of exiles coupled with the Italian atrocities sparked the creation of a variety of anti-Italian associations, particularly in Egypt and Syria. Figures like Bashir al-Saʿdawi, working in Syria, championed a Libyan national identity as part of a broader Arab nationalist movement.[492] Thus, Italian misrule helped create politically-driven exile communities that threatened to disrupt Italian rule in Libya as well as its reputation in the larger Arab world. In this context,

490 For details on this particularly dark episode of Italian colonial history, see Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani, Brava Gente?: Un mito duro a morire* (Vicenza, 2005), pp. 171-189, and Labanca, "Italian Colonial Internment" in *Italian Colonialism*, pp. 27-36.

491 See various reports in ASMAE, Libia B. 1, F. Omar el-Muchtar, B. 2, F. Manifestazioni islamiche anti-italiane.

492 Anna Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation: Colonial legacy, exile and the emergence of a new nation-state* (New York, 2010), pp. 90-109.

the Italians sought to keep a close watch over Libyans abroad, in the hopes of either using them as propaganda pieces, or of limiting the potential damage they could inflict. Such a task proved difficult, as seen in the example of the Tripolitanian community in Tunisia.

Following the Italian conquest of the southwestern territory of Fezzan in February 1930, around 2800 members of the Rojeban, Zintan, Misciascia, Ulad Bu Sef, and Orfella tribes escaped to French Algeria. With leaders like the indefatigable Muhammad al-Fekini, the men of these tribes had fought the Italians for many years as mujahidin. Now they had to make their way through inhospitable terrain to join an already sizeable Tripolitanian community in Tunisia.[493] In the first year alone of the Italian occupation, 35,000 Libyans fled to Tunisia, mostly from poor nomadic tribes along the border. The new arrivals joined migrant laborers as well as other tribes that had already been living in Tunisia for many years.[494] Cognizant of the danger of so many Tripolitanians in a French-held territory, Italy hoped to repatriate as many emigrants and exiles as possible once it had suppressed all armed resistance. Even before the conquest of Fezzan, a pardon had been issued to all who would submit to Italian sovereignty.[495] The Italians believed that doing so would weaken the ability of Libyan political exiles and French authorities to harm Italian interests. Italian officials worried that political exiles inflamed anti-Italian opinion in Tunisia by spreading rumors that travelled by word of mouth and through the press.[496] French authorities

493 Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, pp. 146-148.
494 Baldinetti, *Origins*, pp. 54-56.
495 Ibid., p. 65.
496 ASMAE, Tunisia, B. 1, F. Rapporti Politici (Prima Semestra), Consolato Generale to MAE, "Le false notizie contro l'Italia e la stampa locale musulmana", 30 April 1931.

appeared to relish in the Italian discomfiture. In the case of the Fezzan exiles, a Franco-Italian accord ensured a prompt disarmament, along with the offer of temporary work in Tunisian mines while preparations were made for their return to Tripolitania. Yet by 1931, the Governor of Tripoli, Pietro Badoglio, and the Minister of Colonies, Emilio De Bono, both expressed concerns that the French were prohibiting the re-entry of the Libyan exiles and economic migrants. They accused the French government of forcing around 500 Libyans to stay in the mines without even letting them contact other Libyans. The French efforts frustrated the Italians, who believed that most exiled Tripolitanians no longer trusted their leaders to provide food and shelter, and preferred to return home.[497] Beyond throwing up roadblocks to repatriation, the French also allegedly used an Arab functionary to meet with the miners during a strike to attack Italy's colonial policies.[498] In the eyes of the Italians, the presence of Tripolitanians in Tunisia offered the French a tool to potentially destabilize and threaten the Libyan border region while guaranteeing a cheap labor supply for Tunisian mines.

The tension between the two colonial powers continued into 1933, as the Italians again tried to encourage the resettlement of the five thousand Tripolitanians remaining in Tunisia. The Italian consul in Tunis, Enrico Bombieri, believed that the French were opposed to repatriation "for reasons of prestige, having always studied ways to spread the

497 Ibid., F. Informazioni assunte nei territori coloniali francese, Ministero delle Colonie to MAE, "Notizie riguardanti la Tunisia", 28 May 1931.

498 ASMAE Libia, B. 1 F. Rapporti Politici (1931), Governo della Tripolitania to Ministero delle Colonie, N. 6448, "Situazione fuorusciti nel Sud Algerino", 2 June 1931, Governo della Tripolitania to Ministero delle Colonie, 3 March 1931, Ministero delle Colonie to MAE, N. 62074, "Profughi Libici in Tunisia", 16 March 1931.

most alarming news on the living conditions of Arabs in Libya. This is done to combat nationalist and Destour propaganda that denigrates the action of the French government in Tunisia." Bombieri also surmised that the French wanted to keep the Libyans as a cheap labor pool for Tunisian mines.[499] When the Government of Tripolitania examined the situation, it saw a different threat arising from the maintenance of a Libyan expatriate community in Tunisia. According to Tripoli's informants, Soviet and orthodox Islamic propaganda in Tunisia was "having an effect on our exiles…and they do not show a desire to return, persuaded like many others that the moment of the reawakening of Islam is near." In order to convince the exiles to return, select Libyans had been sent to Tunisia and Algeria to engage in pro-Italian propaganda, but this was deemed by Tripoli and the Ministry of Colonies to cause more harm than good, since many were not well equipped for propaganda work, or were of questionable loyalty. Interestingly, some agents allegedly worked "on their own initiative", which probably caused more concern than optimism among Italian officials.[500]

The presence of so many Libyans in Tunisia therefore posed potential threats to both French and Italian authorities. Events like the Destour's hosting of a meeting of Libyan political exiles in 1933 permitted anti-Italian Libyans to make contacts with other political movements that could harm Italian's reputation among Arabs and Muslims.[501]

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499 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 9, F. Miscellanea, SF. Fratelli Seif En-Nesser, R. Consolato-Tunisi to MAE, "Tripolini in Tunisia e Algeria", 12 August 1933.

500 Ibid., MAE to R. Consolato-Algeri, R. Consolato-Tunisi, N. 231807, "Tripolini in Tunisia e Algeria", 21 October 1933.

501 ANOM, GGA Affaires Indigènes 29H/11 Tripolitania, "Renseignement Tunisie: Réunion à Tunis de la colonie Tripolitaine", 15 February 1933.

Exiles also spread word of Italian injustice in newspapers across the Arab world. For instance, one Libyan who had left for Egypt and then Tunisia after attempting to return, explained to a correspondent for the Pan-Islamic Congress' newspaper *al-Jamʿiyya al-Islamiyya* how Italian rule was exploitative, adding that the Italians ensured that little information about what they were doing reached the rest of the world.[502] For those interested in the fate of Libya, figures like this interviewee were one of the few unauthorized sources of information. And though, as Baldinetti has argued, Libyans in Tunisia were less politically involved than those in Egypt and Syria, where more elites tended to find succor, a branch of the Damascus-based Association for the Defense of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica engaged in anti-Italian propaganda efforts. Seeing an opportunity in this activism, the French encouraged its organizers, who were only able to gather 700 participants, possibly because of the clear French involvement.[503]

Even with these concerns, the Italians opted to let Libyans return "naturally" so as not to put too much stress on the Government of Tripoli. Throughout 1933, almost one thousand exiles in Tunisia came back to Libya, raising the total since the proclamation of amnesty to over seven thousand. By August 1934, the Italian consulate in Tunisia was working with the French administration to aid repatriation efforts, thanks to the French desire to get rid of excess labor in an economic downturn.[504] Yet the French still would not

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502 ASMAE, Libia, B. 7, F. Consiglio Superiore colonial, MAE to Ministero delle Colonie, N. 229467, "Campagna Islamica Antitaliana", 2 October 1933.

503 Baldinetti, *Origins*, pp. 106-107.

504 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 12, F. Cittadinanza, SF. Rientro Seif en-Nasser…Rimpatri di fuorusciti libici dall'Algeria e Tunisia, MAE to Ministero delle Colonie, "Rimpatrio di Sudditi Libici della Tunisia", 3 September 1934.

allow the exiles to cross the border with their livestock, forcing the Italians to try and moderate the number of returnees. The Ministry of Colonies, though in favor of repatriation, required a vetting process to lessen the burden on the Tripolitanian government, given a potential scarcity of resources.[505] As a result, emigrant Libyans found themselves in a web of conflicting national interests as their traditionally transient borders had transformed into hardened state lines where French and Italian political and economic interests held sway.

Despite the Italian hesitations to welcome back what authorities called an "exodus" in one fell swoop, the emigrant Libyans continued to pour into Libya, even illegally crossing the border when the Tunisian consulates were slow to adhere to their demands for repatriation documents. Upon returning to their tribes, the Libyans provided testimony of their experience in Tunisia to the Italians. These documents show that Italian propaganda was not responsible for their return, but rather the arrival of the world economic crisis in Tunisia. While a large number of Libyans had simply crossed the border without documents, they found themselves working in mines or in the urban working classes. As a result, many of those returning had been dependent on the global economy, and suffered the consequences during its depression. According to one miner, the wages he could gain from piecemeal work had fallen from 18-20 francs a day to 2-3.[506] Another Libyan, who worked as a construction worker in Sfax and Bizerte declared that all the Libyan workers

505 Ibid., Ministero delle Colonie to MAE, "Rimpatrio fuorusciti libici residenti a Sfax", 27 June 1934.
506 Ibid., Ministero delle Colonie to MAE, "Rientro indigeno della Tunisia", 9 October 1934.

had been fired and that even the Tunisians had a hard time finding work.[507] Italian records of those that chose to repatriate show that most brought their families with them, suggesting that the economic crisis, coupled with the first period of stability in Tripolitania in two decades, had prompted a permanent return. For some, Italian word of mouth propaganda did appear to have an impact; one worker who had jumped from job to job in Tunisia decided to return clandestinely "because the rumor began, even among Tunisians, that one lives much better in Tripolitania and with a cheap cost of living."[508]

The government of Tripoli reported that another critical factor in the return of so many emigrants was the fear of being enlisted in the French armed forces.[509] In 1933, Bombieri had expressed concern to the French that many Libyans were unfairly subject to military conscription. This situation stemmed from porous Italian border controls from 1912 until 1930 which allowed many Libyans to come to Tunisia without any documents proving their Libyan citizenship. The French Foreign Ministry responded that the borders of Tunisia were secure on the French side, and that Libyans were not allowed in without passports.[510]

Though the Italians hoped to encourage the return of economic migrants, there was little leniency in the way of political exiles. The Government of Cyrenaica tried to ensure

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507 Ibid., Ministero delle Colonie to MAE, "Rientro indigeni della Tunisia", 11 October 1934, "Verbale di interrogatorio", 20 September 1934.

508 Ibid., Ministero delle Colonie to MAE, "Rientro indigeno dalla Tunisia", 2 September 1934.

509 Ibid., Ministero delle Colonie to MAE, "Rientro fuorusciti libici dalla Tunisia", 6 February 1934.

510 ASMAE, Libia, B. 9, F. Questioni di Cittadinanza, R. Ambasciata d'Italia-Paris to MAE, N. 4191/1965, "Cittadinanza Libica", 20 July 1933.

that any emigrants applying for re-admission should be vetted for their political history, and in one instance, denied eight out of seventeen applications sent by Libyans in Haifa and Jaffa.[511] And in the case of the elderly and blind resistance fighter, Muhammad al-Fekini, exiled in Tunisia, the Italian government repeatedly refused his request to return to his former lands. The Italians would not budge on the issue of restoring al-Fekini's confiscated property, and would only countenance his return on the condition that he live under surveillance far from his home and with a small 400 lira monthly allowance. While the Tunisian consul hoped that al-Fekini's return would inspire other emigrants to follow, the government of Tripoli determined that the propaganda value would not be worth the price of compromising Italian authority.[512]

Economic and political migrants constituted the two primary groups whose foreign experiences concerned Italian authorities, but small groups and certain individuals also had to be closely surveilled. Sometimes, Libyan immigrants themselves served as the catalyst for concerns, as when Abu Ray Ali Al-Mahdawi, a merchant in Egypt, denounced his brother in a letter to Mussolini for attempting to switch his nationality to that of Egypt. While al-Mahdawi admitted that he was prepared to stay silent on the issue, he had to take

511 ASMAE, Libia, B. 5, F. Profughi libici in Palestina e Transgiordania, N. 219799, MAE to R. Consolato-Jerusalem, "Profughi Libici", 22 June 1932.

512 For the discussions about what to do with al-Fekini, see ASMAE, Libia, B. 10, F. Rapporti Politici, SF. Fuoruscito libico Mohammed El Fikeni.

action since his brother publicly denigrated Italy and threatened the family's reputation as loyal subjects.[513]

A particularly interesting case was that of Bello Vacca, an Italian born in Tripoli in 1915. Vacca served as a cavalry officer and teacher at an Italo-Arab school before converting to Islam and taking the name Jamel ibn Yusuf Mazara. As a self-described "fascist-Muslim", Vacca appears to have dedicated himself to bridging the two worlds. Having converted, Vacca travelled to Cairo to enroll in al-Azhar, where Egyptian police arrested him for possession of drugs and explosives. Vacca told the Libyan Government that he had sought to play a mediating role between Libyan exiles and the Italian Legation, though no official Italian institution had given him any such role. Vacca was also the likely author of an anonymous letter sent to Mussolini on behalf of Libyan students in Cairo which called for increasing property restitutions to exiled Libyans. Perhaps Vacca was trying to ingratiate himself with students from Italian colonies, as the Rector of al-Azhar believed Vacca to be rather unpopular.[514] Upon his return to Libya, Vacca worried the Italian authorities, since his contacts with Libyans and his Syrian-style clothes threatened to "seriously compromise Italian prestige among the populations of Libya". Governor Italo Balbo and the under-Secretary for the Ministry of Italian Africa explored the possibilities of either forcing the convert to move to Italy or of placing him under police confinement.

513 ASMAE, Egitto, B. 2., F. Questioni di cittadinanza, MAE to R. Consolato Generale-Alexandria, N. 218933, 31 May 1931. It is unclear if the Italians took any action as a result of this fraternal denunciation.

514 ASMAE, Libya, B. 19, F. Rapporti Politici, Cairo Consulate to MAE, N. 1503/557, "Esposto della gioventù tripolina libica degli istituti dottrinali in Cairo", 22 April 1938.

Balbo decided that Vacca had not posed enough of a threat to warrant such measures, and only justified close surveillance.[515] Undeterred by his struggles, Vacca would visit Rome for Hitler's visit,[516] and later explain to an Italian audience in the Libyan press how the reformist program of al-Azhar, supported by King Fuʿad I, was inspired by Italian schools.[517] Vacca serves as an interesting example of the difficulties in merging Italian, Muslim, and fascist identities; he appears to have been distrusted by both Italian fascists and Arab Muslims.

Italian authorities were concerned with other Libyan students at al-Azhar. Vacca was not alone in his desire for reform at al-Azhar. In the effort to bring back the modernizing, but controversial rector, Mustafa al-Maraghi, al-Azhar students took to demonstrating in 1935.[518] Despite the students' success in re-instating al-Maraghi, the Egyptian police arrested some participants, including twenty Libyan students. The Italians decided to expel the most boisterous, Abdel Salem Omran. Though informants warned the local consulate that Omran had written anti-Italian articles for the Egyptian press and led a small anti-Italian faction within the Italian sponsored student housing building, the Vice-Governor of Cyrenaica believed these were mere rumors. However, attempts to re-instate

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515 ASMAE, MAI Affari Politici B. 105, Governo della Libia to MAI, N. 18639, "Bello Vacca Mazara", 1 August 1938, MAI to Governo della Libia, N. 100712, 15 July 1938, Governo della Libia to MAI, N. 14731, 27 June 1938.

516 ASMAE, Libya, B. 19, F. Rapporti Politici, MAE to R. Legazione-Cairo, N. 320170, "Giamail Ibn Ysuf Mazara", 26 August 1938.

517 *Libia: Rivista Mensile Illustrata*, G. Vacca Mazzara, "Al-Azhar: L'Università dello splendore centro intellettuale dell'egitto musulmano", October 1940.

518 For the politics of al-Azhar during the 1930s, see Rainer Brunner, "Education, Politics and the Struggle for Intellectual Leadership: al-Azhar between 1927-1945" in Meir Hatina (ed.), *Guardians of Faith in Modern Times: 'Ulema' in the Middle East* (Boston, 2009), pp. 116-140.

Omran failed, and despite his prior personal and familial history of spotless political behavior, he remained under close surveillance in his hometown of Derna.[519] Omran's decision to engage in the heated debate over the future of al-Azhar thus lost him the support of the Italians, who preferred their students to stay out of trouble.

II. Turning the Libyan Hajj into pro-Italian Propaganda

Another critical area in which Italians tried to control the exposure of Libyans to foreign influences was the Hajj. And as with the exiles and emigrants, the danger of the Hajj was not only in the potential exposure of Libyans to foreign ideas and movements, but also their ability to share anti-Italian views with the rest of the Muslim world. Although few exiles made their way to Saudi Arabia, the titular head of the Senussi order, Ahmad al-Sharif, lived in Mecca until his death in 1933. The Italians were concerned that from the pilgrimage site, al-Sharif could maintain connections with other prominent exiles and spread anti-Italian propaganda during the Hajj. If Ibn Saud was to continue sponsoring congresses of pan-Islamic leaders, it could serve as an opportunity for an influential exile like al-Sharif. In order to stay informed, the Italian consulate of Jedda made a concerted effort to surveille al-Sharif's every move, employing to this end a substantial annual sum.[520]

519 ASMAE, MAI, Vol. II, P. 180/15, F. al-Azhar, MAE to Gov. Benghazi, "Disordini all'Università mussulmana di El Azar al Cairo=Studente libico Abdessalem Omran", 13 March 1935; Gov. Cirenaica to MAE, N. 6263, 23 March 1935; MAE tp Governo della Libia, "Studenti libici Abdussalam Omran e Taher el-Mamdani", 5 May 1935.

520 Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, p. 228.

Furthermore, congresses held in Mecca in 1924 and 1926 had provided a platform for pan-Islamists as first Hussein Sharif, and later Ibn Saʿud attempted to bolster their claim to oversee the holy cities of the Hejaz.[521] When the Italian passenger line company Florio asked the Ministry of Colonies for permission to transport Libyan pilgrims, authorities in Tripoli expressed their concern at the possibility of contacts between the pilgrims and pan-Islamists.[522] Two years later, the Italian ship carrying Libyan pilgrims included two agents tasked with surveilling such interactions.[523]

While attempting to subdue ʿUmar al-Mukhtar's Cyrenaican resistance in 1931, Arab criticism of Italy had reached a fever pitch, and the Italians were particularly concerned about that year's Hajj. Afterwards, the Jedda consul reported that

> the Egyptian Legation told me that anti-Italian agitators had tried to start anti-Italian demonstrations among the pilgrims, who were then all in Mecca, and that the movement's organization had been directed by Ahmed Sharif Senussi. The news that arrived from Mecca was hardly more reassuring: among the pilgrims the accusations against Italy became a preferred topic of conversation and commentary that was, needless to say, unfavorable to us. In Jedda, my guards surprised groups of pilgrims intent on listening in the public streets to the reading of an [anti-Italian] libel; some of them cried, while others insulted Italy. With such an atmosphere, it was not difficult for those committed to their task to incite restlessness, which, in the special circumstances of religious fervor, could have caused a serious incident with vast repercussions in other Muslim countries. One could then only wait for the unvoiced unrest among the pilgrims to assume larger proportions and for the designs of the agitators working in the shadows to have a jumping-off point.[524]

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521 Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 236-240.

522 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/35, F. Pellegrinaggi di Libia alla Mecca 1926-1929, Telegram N. 162, 27 January 1926.

523 Ibid., N. 1604, Governo della Cirenaica to Ministero delle Colonie, "Pellegrinaggio ai luoghi santi dell'Hegiaz", 19 May 1928.

524 ASMAE, Libia B. 2, F. Manifestazioni islamiche anti-italiane, R. Consolato-Jeddah to MAE, N. 288/A-91, "Propaganda anti-Italiana-Ahmed Scerif", 18 May 1931.

The consul added that he had pleaded with the Saudi Government to crack down on anti-Italian pamphlets and journals, but suspected the Saudis of attempting to appease both Italy and Muslim political activists.[525] Such efforts appear to have been fruitful, with the Consul noting a few days later that King Ibn Saʿud had been accused by "local nationalists" of "sequestering a great quantity of pamphlets published by the 'Tripoli Committee in Egypt' as well as those newspapers that reproduced their call for aid, wherever they were found", and for having "ordered the Police to surveille the most rowdy nationalists and above all those most familiar with Ahmed Sharif".[526] Thanks to Ibn Saʿud's desire to use Italy as a geopolitical counter to Great Britain, the Italians had help in their attempt to stifle anti-Italian discourses and actions. By July, the consul could say confidently that the anti-Italian movement "has failed thanks primarily to the firm demeanor of the Wahhabi sovereign."[527] Yet the episode highlights the importance of the Hajj as a theatre in which Muslim public opinion could potentially turn against Italy. Consequently, at first the Italians treated the Hajj to Mecca largely as an event in which spies and agents had to limit any potential damage to Italy's reputation. Yet with a more assertive Italian propaganda policy towards Arabs and Muslims, the Hajj became more of an opportunity than a danger. Fascist Italy therefore embarked on an effort to try and dictate its own representation in the eyes of Muslim pilgrims.

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525 Ibid.

526 ASMAE, Libia, B. 2, F. Manifestazioni islamiche anti-italiane, MAE to R. Ambasciata-London, N. 222703, "Manifestazioni islamiche antitaliane-Politica araba", 25 June 1931.This telegram was a forwarding of a consular report from 24 May 1931.

527 ASMAE, MAI, Vol. 1., P. 91/22, F. Paese arabi Periodo 1928-1935, R. Consolato-Jeddah to MAE, N. 449/A 89, "Pellegrinaggio nel Higiaz del 1931", 10 July 1931.

Though the Hajj presented a threat to their prestige, the Italians slowly developed an apparatus to exploit the pilgrimage for their own benefits. The first steps taken by the fascists began in 1927 when the Jedda consul noted the Italian-Muslim Hospice in Mecca serviced Italian-Muslim pilgrims more effectively than those from most other countries. With a full-time director, he believed the Hospice could further improve the Italian image in Mecca, while also providing Italy with an agent who could act as an informant and mediator with Meccan authorities for the Jedda consulate. Furthermore, the Foreign Ministry suggested that, given "the echo that is produced throughout the Muslim world by everything that happens in the Hejaz during the pilgrimage", Libyan pilgrims be sent to Mecca on Italian rather than British ships.[528] At this point, the Italians began to take a stricter control over the Hajj more seriously, though it was only in the 1930s that their efforts became substantial.

The first attempt to place an agent as Director of the Hospice proved to be a failure. From the moment that the Tripolitanian Dr. Edhem Aref was appointed in 1929, the new consul in Jedda, Guido Sollazzo, balked at the expenses to be incurred for a position.[529] Shortly after, Sollazzo also suspected that Aref was not only negligent in his duties as an informant, but also anti-Italian. Two Italian subjects working for the consulate reported that Aref had "attempted to suborn them, calling them to Muslim solidarity and to the racial community with the intention of distancing them from the consulate and instilling in their

528 ASMAE, MAI, Vol. 1, P. 92/20, F. Yemen, MAE to Ministero delle Colonie, N. 357321, "Ospizio Italo-Musulmano di Mecca", 7 November 1927.
529 Ibid., MAE to Ministero delle Colonie, "Ospizio Italo-Musulmano alla Mecca", 21 August 1929.

spirit the venom of hatred against Italy." Furthermore, Sollazzo also believed Aref was on good terms with several Senussi exiles. In short, the man sent to facilitate Italian propaganda and surveillance was working against their own interests, and was quickly recalled.[530] Aref's replacement, Muhammad Ali Dafer, proved to be a trustworthy director, and held his post throughout the 1930s.

In terms of surveilling Libyan pilgrims, Dafer's job was not too difficult, since the number fluctuated between a high of 169 and a low of 66 between 1931 and 1936. And Dafer indeed proved more loyal than Aref, informing Sollazzo that three pilgrims had frequented Senussi establishments in Mecca in 1931. While Sollazzo then suggested that only those who were politically loyal be permitted to embark,[531] or that Libyans be simply forbidden to go until the end of military operations in Libya, the Minister of Colonies, Emilio De Bono, rejected this extreme measure, fearing that such measures would raise anti-Italian sentiment abroad and that the limited number of pilgrims posed little risk.[532] Indeed, a careful selection of participants does not appear to have been Italian policy until the meticulously planned pilgrimages of 1936-1938. Yet even with the small number of pilgrims, each year saw Italy take the Hajj more seriously. In 1933, the Jedda consulate got approval for a Bank of Italy representative to aid pilgrims in conversion exchanges to avoid exorbitant rates.[533] At the same time, the undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Fulvio Suvich,

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530 Ibid., R. Consolato-Jeddah to MAE, N. 45689, "Rimpatrio dottore Aref", 18 June 1930.

531 ASMAE, MAI, Vol. I, P. 91/22, F. Paesi arabi Periodo 1925-1935, R. Consolato- Jeddah to Governo della Cirenaica, N. 297/A 89, "Rimpatrio Pellegrini della Cirenaica", 20 May 1931.

532 Ibid., Ministero delle Colonie to MAE, N. 65420, 6 July 1931.

533 Ibid., MAE to Banca d'Italia, N. 218592, "Invio a Gedda di un rappresentante della succursale della Banca d'Italia ad Asmara", 19 June 1933.

who was a strong advocate for a pro-Islamic/Arab policy, attempted to convince Italian shipping companies to make room for Hajj pilgrims. The time was right for a propaganda coup, according to Suvich, because "in the Islamic world, France has been accused of hampering the pilgrimage of its subjects to Mecca, placing obstacles in the way of their departure." If Italy increased its transportation, it would gain sympathy from Saudi Arabia and in "the whole Islamic world".[534] And though the three main shipping companies all expressed either the impossibility or difficulty of fulfilling Suvich's wishes,[535] it was clear that by the mid-1930s fascist authorities had taken an interest in integrating the Hajj into their larger propaganda campaign to appeal to Arab and Muslim sensibilities.

Indeed, Suvich continued his efforts to politicize the Hajj. In January 1936, in the midst of a new wave of anti-Italian sentiment provoked by the invasion of Ethiopia, Suvich hoped to utilize the Hajj to assert that Italy, and not Great Britain, would protect Islamic traditions and customs. In a note sent to the Minister of Colonies, Alessandro Lessona, Suvich claimed that "it is evident that Muslims influenced by Great Britain will seek to give the pilgrimage the character of a demonstration against Italian 'aggression', and will strive to convince Somalis and Arabs to not fight with us", and that "it is obvious that this year's pilgrimage will be a crucible in which Great Britain will try to observe the various reactions of the Muslim world in the face of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, directing them, if possible, against our interests". In response, Suvich advocated bypassing the required

534 Ibid., MAE to Ministero delle Comunicazioni, N. 214036/767, "Pellegrinaggio alla Mecca", 9 May 1933.

535 Ibid., Ministero delle Comunicazioni to MAE, N. 17402, "Pellegrinaggio alla Mecca", 21 December 1933.

deposit of one thousand lire in exchange for a special passport given with an oath of loyalty. The pilgrims would then travel in a single steamer, with medical tasks carried out by Muslims.[536]

Suvich's plan faced opposition from Balbo, who believed that the number of pilgrims was small and loyal enough that exposure to potential anti-Italian propaganda was not a serious risk, and that lifting the thousand lire deposit requirement would simply result in the Italians having to pay for repatriation expenses.[537] Alessandro Lessona informed Suvich that "even this year it was not possible to organize a true pilgrimage with the special steamer" due to a limited number of requests from Libyans.[538] Yet Balbo did attempt to assuage Suvich's concerns by exerting more influence over the 1936 pilgrimage, which would be the first of a string of highly controlled and political pilgrimages. According to Lessona, the small pilgrimage of sixty-six Libyans, chosen among those of "secure and excellent political precedents" would utilize the pilgrims "as a propaganda opportunity for our ends to be carried out in the Hejaz among fellow Muslims that will arrive from various parts of the Muslim world".[539]

A report from the leader of the Libyan group, Commandant Muhammad Jacoubi, gives us a fascinating insight into how Libyans navigated foreign spaces while protecting Italy's image and interests. While travelling from Tripoli and Benghazi to Alexandria, Jacoubi gained the trust of the pilgrims to better "guide and control them" by aiding them

536 Ibid., Suvich to Lessona, N. 547, 14 January 1936.
537 Ibid., Balbo to Lessona, N. 61988, 12 February 1936.
538 Ibid., Lessona to Suvich, N. 61988, 21 February 1936.
539 Ibid., Ministero delle Colonie to MAE, "Pellegrinaggio alla Mecca", 21 February 1936.

in currency exchanges and in paperwork preparations. Once in Egypt, Jacoubi ensured that the pilgrims stayed together and avoided contact with Libyan exiles whom he suspected would attempt to contact the travelers for information and to turn them against Italy. Jacoubi also took advantage of his time in Egypt to spy on those same exiles, pointing out which ones were in the pay of Great Britain. Finally, he visited the most pro-Italian Libyan students of Al-Azhar, who assured him that they did not allow the others to speak ill of Italy.

The next phase of the trip saw the group travel by an Egyptian boat from Suez to Jedda. On the way, Jacoubi convinced a provincial Egyptian leader that the Libyan freedom to travel to Mecca disproved the rumors circulating about Italian abuses in Libya. The party then quickly moved from Jedda to Mecca, where they were lodged in the Italian hospice, along with over two hundred Eritreans, Somalis, and Ethiopians, with the presence of the latter making "a strong impression on the Libyan pilgrims". Upon returning from Medina to Jedda, the pilgrims told Jacoubi that the Italians should build a Hospice in Medina similar to that in Mecca, so they could stay together instead of being mixed in with other groups. Finally, on the way back on a French steamer, Jacoubi continued to vouch for Italy. As he reported,

> I had a chance to meet many Tunisians and Moroccans from whom I heard many not very favorable opinions regarding our Government's actions in Libya and during the occupation of Ethiopia. I sought to change their minds, showing the true facts, and I learned that the information they received came from the Arab press and communist propaganda. I also had a chance to notice their amazement when we entered the port of Tripoli, where they remarked upon its infrastructure, the grandiose aspect the city offered, and their verification that Italy had not destroyed mosques to build churches as they were told, but had restored them and built new

> ones. I therefore have the feeling that many of the false ideas put in their heads were afterwards changed.[540]

The 1936 pilgrimage thus displayed how the Italians could hope to benefit from the Hajj through careful control over its participants and the use of political agents to counter anti-Italian propaganda. And Balbo promptly forwarded the pilgrim's request for a hospice in Medina to the Colonial Ministry.[541] The Jedda chargé d'affaires, Giovanni Persico, agreed with the plan, arguing that the added Ethiopian pilgrims would render such a service necessary, and that "regardless of the pilgrim's comfort, the fact that they will be together in the same building will facilitate their political and sanitary control by the Legation."[542] By 1937, the Medina hospice was functioning under the guidance of Ali Dafer's cousin.

From 1937 to 1939, the political use of the Hajj by the Italians reached its height, thanks to co-operation with their Spanish nationalist allies. Since Franco relied heavily on Moroccan troops, the Nationalists sought to follow in Italy's footsteps by appealing to the religious sensibilities of its Muslim subjects. By working together to help their subjects perform the Hajj, the Italians and Spanish could assert universal fascism as the only ideological platform that respected Islamic traditions. And in practical terms, the Spanish would supply a suitable ship for both Moroccan and Libyan pilgrims to avoid resorting to French or British transportation, while the Italian network of consulates and hospices could

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540 ASMAE, MAI, Vol. 1, P. 92/20, F. Ospizio Italo-Musulmano di Medina, "Relazione sul pellegrinaggio alla Mecca", M. Jacoubi, 4 April 1936.

541 Ibid., Governo della Libia to Ministero delle Colonie, N. 6091, "Pellegrinaggio alla Mecca, 1936", 16 April 1936.

542 Ibid., R. Legazione-Jeddah to MAE, N. 642/236, "Pelleginaggio alla Mecca", 6 August 1936.

represent the interests of the Nationalist government.[543] The Spanish therefore prepared the steamer "Domine" to carry Moroccan and Libyan pilgrims to Mecca. The French were quick to realize the implications of the pilgrimage, with a message sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs warning that the Spanish and Italian efforts would lead to a rise in anti-French propaganda, partly because the number of pilgrims from French Morocco that year would only be slightly higher than those from Spanish Morocco, despite having a population ten times greater.[544] According to the Italian consul in Tétouan, the presence of the Italian destroyer "Scirocco" in Ceuta, sent to protect the steamer, occasioned "frenetic applause" by the Moroccans that amassed on the quay. He also reported that the news of Italian protection caused the number of pilgrims to jump from 202 to 315, with others being rejected for lack of space, while rumors circulated that the Italians would treat the pilgrims to a lavish welcome in Tripoli.[545] And indeed, the pilgrims were given a tour of Tripoli and its principle mosques by Libyan notables.[546] In Italian eyes then, the event would serve as a chance to display its power and benevolence to Muslims outside of Libya. The political nature of the visit to Tripoli also caught the attention of the French consul in Tripoli, who reported that "the pilgrims and the crew of the 'Domine' welcomed the [Libyan] notables with cries of 'Long live Mussolini, Franco and Hitler'." Furthermore, the interior of the

543 MAE, MAI, Vol. 1., P. 91/22, F. Paesi arabi Periodo 1925-1935, MAE to MAI, N. 243708, "Pellegrinaggio spagnolo alla Mecca", 15 December 1937.

544 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Oran, 5I/55, Résidence Générale-Maroc to Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, N. 353, "Politique musulmane de Burgos- Pèlerinage à La Mecque", 22 February 1937.

545 MAE, MAI, Vol. 1., P. 91/22, F. Paesi arabi Periodo 1925-1935, MAE to Ministero delle Comunicazioni, N. 203542, "Pellegrinaggio marocchino alla Mecca", 2 February 1937.

546 Ibid., Reggente Governo Bruni to Ministero delle Colonie, 4 February 1937.

ship focused on the fascist patronage of Islam, with a "central hall, arranged as a prayer room, decked out with the colors of the Spanish rebels, as well as those of Italy, Germany, and Portugal." The large number of Moroccan soldiers partaking in the Hajj then spread throughout Tripoli, "giving the fascist salute and everywhere arousing the curiosity of the local indigènes." The consul had no doubt that the pilgrims were handpicked, and admitted that members of his consulate who talked with them "attested to their remarkable culture and their profound knowledge of European governments."[547] Yet despite the pilgrims' apparent dedication to their fascist sponsors, when the Tétouan consul suggested that the Moroccans stop again in Tripoli to salute Mussolini during his trip to Libya,[548] Balbo disagreed, stating that they "represented an element capable of dangerous infiltrations."[549]

On the whole, however, the Italians and Spanish were pleased enough with the cooperative effort to repeat it in 1938. This time, Italy chose not to send a warship to Ceuta as an escort, since the Spanish had already assigned their own cruisers for the task.[550] Yet the decision seemed to have hurt Italian prestige with local Moroccans, who crowded the Italian consulate's office demanding to know if Mussolini would protect the pilgrimage or not. The consul also pointed to the possibility that the lack of an enthusiastic celebration

547 ANOM, FM 1AFFPOL/914, Le gerant du consulat de France à Tripoli d'Afrique to Le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, "Escale à Tripoli du navire rebelle espagnol "Domine" transportant au Hedjaz des pélerins marocains", 4 February 1937.

548 ASMAE, MAI, Vol. 1, P. 91/22, F. Paesi arabi Periodo 1925-1935, Ministero delle Colonie to Governo Tripoli, N. 54351, 26 February 1937.

549 Ibid., Balbo to Ministero delle Colonie, 28 February 1937.

550 Ibid., Ministero della Marina to MAE, N. B 3960, "Pellegrinaggio marocchini spagnoli alla Mecca", 25 March 1938.

along the pier may have been caused by the lack of an Italian presence.[551] Despite this beginning, the 1938 pilgrimage again seems to have gone well for the Italians. Tunisians travelling to Mecca via the newly opened Litoranea coastal highway in Libya expressed their admiration for Italian rule to border authorities. While in Mecca, some Libyans reported that their attempts to publicly stump for Mussolini in Mecca had incited arguments with Egyptians.[552] Though this may have been a means of gaining Italian trust, since the consul in Jedda had not heard of such incidents from his informants, several participating Libyan notables assured that Mussolini had been included in private prayers.[553]

In 1939, the Libyans and Moroccans took separate ships, but Ali Dafer continued to oversee their stay in Mecca. A French report explained how the 1,100 Moroccan and 772 Libyan pilgrims continued to speak in the name of the fascist powers, stating that "The majority of these pilgrims seemed to us to be propagandists sent by their respective Governments, charged particularly with critiquing Anglo-French colonization in overseas colonies populated by Muslims." They not only critiqued, but praised their governments and forecast their success in future conflicts:

> On the subject of international tensions, the Moroccans hoped that one day Italy would declare war on France, thus allowing them to take hold of French Morocco. They have at their disposition, they say, enough weapons, munitions, and German-Italian war materials to throw themselves at the French zone and liberate their brothers. They continued, as in the past, to praise Franco, Mussolini, and Hitler. They say that these men are the benefactors of humanity, the future liberators of the Muslim world placed momentarily under Anglo-French protection. France for these men is an exhausted nation, ruined by politic and Jewish international finance; that

551 Ibid., MAE to MAI, N. 210200, "Pellegrinaggio marocchini spagnoli alla Mecca", 1 March 1938.

552 Ibid., MAE to MAI, N. 214212, 22 April 1938.

553 Ibid., MAE to MAI, N. 220505, 13 June 1938.

> in the case of war, it would not last more than two months, thanks to a lack of gold in its treasury to make purchases abroad. They think no less of Great Britain and believe that the Jewish hold over this nation will wind up losing it. As for the Libyans backing the Italian cause, who were rather numerous, they continue to praise the "Duce" whose voyage to Libya in March 1937 has utterly transformed the social situation of Muslims. And they add: Marshal Balbo has become the father of Libyan Arabs by installing equality of rights between Italians and Libyans, aiding the fellahs, and creating Italian schools with Arabic instruction, for which he has appealed to Arabic masters of Egyptian, Syrian, and Tunisian origin. The Libyan refugees in Tunisia who were promised impunity have re-integrated into their country by receiving their properties that had previously been confiscated. As for the installation of the new Italian colonists, they have not hurt a single native. Finally, they admire the Head of the Italian government, despise our country, and are sure that Tunisia will become in the near future Italian through an accord or through conquest.

The pilgrims were then capable of asserting Italian claims on a multitude of questions, while also inserting their own hopes for the "liberation of the Muslim world". Finally, a point often repeated by the Libyans and Moroccans was that their governments had organized the trip at prices that halved what the French charged. Though the author of the intelligence report was sure of the loyalty of French subjects, he believed that the question of costs "was skillfully exploited and we could have avoided several unfortunate incidents if precautionary measures had been taken beforehand."[554]

Yet, as Luc Chantre has argued, the Italian efforts at utilizing the Hajj as a propaganda tool had begun to backfire by 1939. Co-operation with Spain continued, but Italian authorities worried that they were being upstaged by their allies. Meanwhile the targeted audience soon tired of Italian proclamations, as the invasion of Muslim-majority Albania in April 1939 served as further proof of Italy's lack of respect for the independence

554 ANOM, GGA Algérie, 29H/12 Tripolitania, "Rapport", 27 February 1939.

of Muslim nations.[555] Perhaps Italian claims around the Mediterranean were also rendered hollow thanks to its governing strategies in Libya itself, a topic to which we will now turn.

THE FAILURE OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INTEGRATION

The Italian concerns about Libyans abroad, though intensified by the fascist desire in the mid to late-1930s to alter the Mediterranean status-quo, was not so different from the desire of France and Great Britain to surveille the activities and movements of their own colonial subjects. A second tool of controlling Libyans was more clearly fascist in content, though it was never fully developed. This was the strategy of placing Libyans, particularly those living in the coastal cities, in fascist institutions. While Great Britain and France served as the great models of parliamentary and republican governance, they had to limit such political institutions in their North African and Middle Eastern colonies and Mandates in order to uphold their economic and geopolitical interests. Italy, on the other hand, could export its totalitarian institutions to colonial subjects without undermining its imperial power. If a significant consequence of the fascist creation of organizations for youth, leisure, domestic life, and economic groupings was the de-politicization of mass politics through regimented public life, then theoretically such a system would be adaptable to Italian colonies.

Such a response would also seem to mimic fascist "third-way" rhetoric, normally meant as an alternative to capitalism and communism/socialism, in the colonial sphere, where Western colonial administrators and experts tended to debate the merits and demerits

555 Luc Chantre, *Le pèlerinage à La Mecque à l'époque coloniale (v. 1866-1940): France, Grande-Bretagne-Italie*, Dissertation (Université de Poitiers, 2012), pp. 636-637.

of assimilation and association. Fascist colonial experts, bureaucrats, and journalists were very clear in their rejection of "French" assimilation, for a number of reasons. In their eyes, assimilation would dilute the unity of the Italian nation by introducing foreign elements while also risking the foundations of Italian colonial sovereignty. Furthermore, they generally argued, not only in propaganda pieces, but also in internal memos and reports, that assimilation would tend to undermine local traditions and ways of life that had to be respected if Italy was to hold any authority. The model of association, which saw colonial administrations acquiesce to the maintenance of traditional local authorities and the forbearance of overly direct Western impositions in exchange for political loyalty, was viewed more favorably by fascists. Yet the fascists tended to denigrate the "British" model, which they viewed as a form of association that was overpowered by capitalist interests that ruthlessly extracted resources from British colonial subjects. The Italian form of association, rhetorically, was based on vague promises that colonial subjects would be protected and nurtured by the state.[556] The fascist distinction between colonial models drew clear contrasts that did not exist in reality. The fact that most French colonial administrators had largely given up on assimilation by the 1920s and 1930s was largely ignored. Yet if the fascists wished to distinguish their colonial model, it would have to be through the importing of fascist institutions into the colonies. As we will see, despite some small steps,

556 This view was expressed frequently. One can see it in the criticism of French colonialism given by the director of *l'Azione Coloniale*, Marco Pomilio, "La Francia non è una potenza coloniale", 16 September 1937, or in a 1940 monograph by a fascist geography student, Luchino Revelli di Beaumont, submitted for an award, *La colonizzazione romana e quella fascista*, p. 52. ACS, MAE 22/1, B. 2100.

this was never accomplished in Libya due to constant administrative and legal concerns, as well as the strong emphasis placed on Italian racial prestige with the conquest of Ethiopia in 1935-1936 and the passing of the Racial Laws targeting Italian Jews in November 1938.

I. Inquadramento Strategies

The first group targeted for fascist integration was youth. Though this was a project proposed by Governor Balbo in 1935, there had already been precedents for subjecting Libyan youth to "fascist discipline". In Cyrenaica, four schools of orphans, with the support of the government and local Italian leaders, trained about two thousand Libyans in agricultural practices and small trades. Yet these were not viewed as simple trade-schools, as physical education was heavily stressed as a means of creating the "soldiers, workers, and farmers" that would constitute "the future citizens of Cyrenaica". A journalist lauded the effort, describing how the students engaged in gymnastic activities "presented perfectly organized and disciplined centuries" that "paraded…behind their flags, to the cadenced rhythm of drums and trumpets, with a sure step and in perfectly aligned groups, and saluted like so many little soldiers and offered a picturesque show in their blue uniforms, with their aviator berets and crimson belts, giving one the sense of witnessing the movements of instructed and highly disciplined Ascari companies."[557] Despite the professional training acquired by the students, it is clear that these schools also served the role of the Italian Balilla organization in providing forms of pre-military training.

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557 *Cirenaica Illustrata: Rivista mensile d'espansione colonial*, Carlo Milanese, "Le grandi opera del bene: I college-ragazzi in Cirenaica", pp. 7-11.

Balbo's official institutionalization of this practice came in 1935 with the establishment of the Gioventù Araba del Littorio (GAL, The Arab Lictor Youth). In his proposal to Mussolini, Balbo stressed that the GAL would appeal to the Libyan "masses" and make of the "new generations, that interest us the most, disciplined subjects proud to belong to the nation." Despite these grand ambitions, Balbo conceded that the project would have a somewhat limited recruitment at first, in order to carefully control the loyalty of the first members.[558] A few months later, Balbo was bragging to Mussolini about the positive reception in Tripoli when the newly founded GAL participated in the ceremonies for the thirteenth anniversary of the March on Rome.[559]

There is unfortunately not much documentation on the GAL, but we know of its organizational structure and early membership numbers. The purpose of the GAL was to provide pre-military training to Libyan youth between twelve and eighteen years old. Perhaps to stress the military nature of the organization, the administration was carried out not by the National Fascist Party (PNF), but by the Black Shirts. The Black Shirts were an all-voluntary militia that served as an ideological appendix to the military, since the latter had not become a truly fascist institution. Their responsibility over the GAL indicates the Italian desire to focus on the military training of its members. GAL members were split into two groups: the Aṭfal (Children) between twelve and fifteen and Shubban (Youth) between sixteen and eighteen. Those Shubban who were students were separated into a

558 ASMAE, MAI Affari Politici, B. 92, F. Costituzione in Libia della Gioventù araba del Littorio "G.A.L.", 1935-1940, Balbo to Mussolini, N. 66015, 3 June 1935.
559 Ibid., Balbo to Mussolini, N. 70839, 28 October 1935.

special section and kept apart from the others where possible. This was most likely done to keep the sons of Libyan notables from mixing too closely with other Libyan youth. While the Aṭfal would train with batons, the Shubban would be given rifles. The periods of instruction were somewhat sporadic, held two or three times per month with exceptions for religious holidays and agricultural work. Instruction consisted of gymnastics/sports, unit training, Italian language and culture, and lessons on hygiene, agriculture, and pastoralism. Eighteen months after the founding of the GAL, the total membership had reached 5318 in forty-five sections.[560]

In May 1936, over one thousand GAL members visited Rome along with a group of Libyan notables. The Libyan youth camped on the outskirts of the city and visited the Colonial Museum, some of the famous sites of Rome's past, and the newer fascist zones of the University City and the Mussolini Forum for athletics where a cinematographic event was held.[561] Despite this early exercise in attempting to turn the GAL into a depoliticizing tool of mass politics akin to other fascist organizations, it is hard to gauge the extent to which the normal activities of the youth group fulfilled this purpose. Information is scarce in this regard, although the GAL had their own Balilla-inspired beach camps, and were allowed to compete in sports events against Italian squadrons, indicating that the objections of some colonial administrators to interracial sports were ignored.[562] Youth camps for

560 Ibid., "Cenni sulla costituzione e sul funzionamento della G.A.L.", Console Generale Comandante Ottorino Giannantoni, 4 December 1936.

561 Ibid., "Programma per i Libici appartenenti alla gioventù araba del Littorio".

562 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/32, F. Notiziari Politici, 1935-1936, "Elementi del Notiziario N. 47", *Libia, Rivista Mensile Illustrata*, November-December 1940, "Vita sportiva", p. 36. For

children under twelve were also established to guide them towards GAL enrollment later; they were given basic military and agricultural training.[563] At times, GAL members served as mediators between Italian authorities and the broader population, as when they distributed an illustrated news publication in Arabic.[564] And to inculcate young Libyans into the fascist "youth spirit", a revised version of the fascist anthem *Giovinezza* was edited for GAL members to sing.[565] Whatever the effects of these attempts to turn the GAL into a fascist institution, a proposal during World War II to shift the responsibility for the GAL from the Black Shirts to the National Fascist Party indicated a desire to focus more on the political nature of the organization while still providing pre-military training.[566] It is likely that the military priorities of the GAL upset Libyan parents; according to a French report, the resistance of Bedouin parents who were held responsible for their children's presence at training camps was "ruthlessly suppressed".[567]

The establishment of agricultural villages served as another field in which Balbo sought to apply fascist tools of social and political control to the Libyan population. In

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an argument against such matches, see *L'Azione Coloniale*, 18 February 1937, "Per la dignità del bianco", Maurizio Rava, p. 1.

563 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/32, F. Notiziari Politici, 1935-1936, "Notiziario N. 50", November 1936.

564 ASC, 18/1 Minculpop Gabinetto, B. 15, F. Libia, Balbo to Minculpop report, 25 September 1939.

565 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/35, F. Libia: Notiziario per radio-diffusione, N. 1121, Noziziario settimanale per radio-diffusione, 25 January 1937.

566 ASMAE, MAI, Affari Politici, B. 92, F. Costituzione in Libia della G.A.L., MAI to Governo Generale della Libia, "Gioventù Araba del Littorio", 31 August 1941.

567 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Oran 5I/55, F. Situation du monde Musulman, C.I.E. L'Italie en Libye, Capitaine Maquart, February 1939. Unfortunately, the specifics of this event are not provided.

1938, Balbo jump-started the failed attempts to colonize Libya with Italian settlers by overseeing the transportation and establishment of twenty thousand Italians, mostly from the unemployed and struggling families of the Veneto and Emilia regions, into government prepared agricultural villages along the Libyan coastline.[568] Another ten thousand arrived the following year, amid growing fears among Libyans who had already been subject to land confiscations and pasturage restrictions. In response, Balbo decided to implement a colonization program specifically for Libyans. Since offers of state support for private Libyan landowners ran into too many bureaucratic obstacles to have much effect,[569] Italian economic planners decided that the blueprint for Italian colonization should be repeated for Libyans. Families would apply and be settled in state-built farmhouses and model villages with mosques, cafés, markets, and schools. By settling traditionally nomadic and pastoral Libyans onto sedentary, state-backed farms, the fascists could claim to bring Libyans into their "civilization". It is important to note that this experiment occurred in the context of much larger Italian attempts to settle poor Italian families on small farms in order to slow down movement into cities. Furthermore, fascist ideology framed the agricultural initiatives as a means of creating the ideal fascist soldier-laborer. Placing Libyans in such villages then was not just a means of deflecting criticism from Italian settler-colonialism, but a positive measure meant to create a class of Libyan farmers more dependent on the fascist state and representative of fascist values. As such, Italian

568 For a detailed history of the mass colonization, known as the Ventimila, see Claudio G. Segrè, *Fourth Shore: The Italian Colonization of Libya* (Chicago, 1974), pp. 102-143.
569 Ibid., pp. 147-149.

authorities immediately spread the news of the initiative through their Middle Eastern and North African consulates, while figures like Balbo and the former governor De Bono made official visits to highlight to the farmers and to the press the importance of the Italian policy shift.[570]

However, reality was quite distant from propaganda. Only four villages saw the light of day. Two of these, called Zahra and Fajr, were situated along the coast and west of Derna. Both struggled to get off the ground, with Balbo hoping Libyan notables could aid in recruitment; a third, Jedida, was never populated. Mahamura, located to the southwest of Tripoli, appears to have had more success. Other villages were planned, but the war obstructed the project before it could develop. Yet it is unlikely that the villages would offer Libyans a panacea for the Italian land-grab. Though the Libyan villages followed the same practical and ideological contours of those destined for Italian settlers, their scope was significantly reduced. The base discrepancies were significant: 131 Libyan families with farms up to five hectares in size settled in three villages while Balbo's colonization program placed three thousand Italian families on farms of up to fifty hectares of more fertile land. And while Libyans in Tripolitania proved eager to apply for the settlements, recruitment in Cyrenaica was much more difficult given the region's greater emphasis on pastoralism and mistrust in the Italians following the brutal measures taken in the early

570 ASMAE, MAI, Affari Politici, B. 59, F. Notizie sulle popolazioni, Governo della Libia to MAI, N. 243062, "Provvidenze per gli agricoltori mussulmani in Libia", 10 December 1939.

1930s. Overall, the project ended in failure, with the Libyans showing little enthusiasm and the Italian agricultural technicians expressing their frustration with the entire experience.[571]

That the Italians had failed to provide economic opportunities for the Libyans who had been removed from their traditional grazing lands became clear during the first British occupation of Cyrenaica (February-March 1941) during World War II. Freed from Italian authorities, Libyans demonstrated their resentment at decades of land expropriations and harsh treatment by attacking the farms occupied by the new Italian settlers. Violence between Libyans and Italians broke out sporadically as well, with between twelve and fourteen Italian deaths. Authorities looked to settler letters to gauge the degree of tensions. The results belied the supposed collaboration between Italians and Libyans. As one settler wrote in a censored letter, "Every time I see an Arab and I'm sure to not be discovered, I send him to find his Muhammad".[572] A memorandum for Mussolini warned that the violence should not encourage state reprisals, and was simply a manifestation of "war psychosis".[573] Fascist authorities may have wished to play down the mutual hatred, but the acts of Libyan resistance were clearly a cathartic moment for the dispossessed, a moment when, as Federico Cresti has argued, the "blood and hatred" caused by land expropriation spilled over.[574]

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571 More detailed accounts of the Libyan colonization program can be found in Segrè, *Fourth Shore*, pp. 144-151, and Federico Cresti, *Non desiderare la terra d'altri: La colonizzazione italiana in Libia* (Rome, 2011), pp. 215-226.

572 ASMAE, MAI Affari Politici B. 25, F. Occupazione Inglese della Cirenaica, N. 812855, "lettere provenienti dal Gebel cirenaico", 15 May 1941.

573 Ibid., Direzione Generale degli Affari Politici, "Appunti per il Duce", 13 August 1941.

574 Cresti, *Non desiderare*, pp. 239-258.

II. Debates over Libyan Citizenship

With the failure of the agricultural settlements, and the limited political nature of the GAL, the tentative first steps towards inserting Libyans into fascist society proved rather ineffective. Only a thorough re-ordering of the colonial hierarchy could provide the impetus to a more equitable and serious application of fascist institutions and social programs to Libyans. Yet the debate over Libyan citizenship which lasted throughout the late 1930s, ended in a resounding failure for those who hoped that substantive reforms would offer a more promising future for Libyans. An examination of the internal debate will show how concerns about Italian racial prestige, reactions from Arabs and Muslims abroad, and French colonial problems played important roles in dampening the few attempts to grant Libyans a form of citizenship that would offer guarantees to participate equally in Italian fascist society.

With the unification of the colonies of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in 1934, Libyans gained the legal status of "Libyan Italian citizens", with the option of gaining full "metropolitan" citizenship for those who were monogamous, had reached a certain level of education, were innocent of any criminal/anti-Italian political activities, and were already either a military veteran, a civil servant, decorated by the state, or a descendent of an already naturalized Libyan. As in French North Africa, choosing this form of citizenship necessitated the renunciation of adherence to the Islamic "personal status". In December 1935, Italo Balbo proposed a Decree Law that would give him the power to facilitate the accession of Libyans and foreign nationals to metropolitan citizenship, with certain

limitations,[575] for a period of two years. Balbo's motives were clear: he believed he could bolster the faith of Libyan elites in Italy with a more liberal awarding of full citizenship. Furthermore, by also naturalizing foreigners, the Italians could subtract them from foreign sovereignty and ensure fewer occasions for interventions in Libyan affairs.

Balbo's proposal would begin a discussion on the legal status of Libyans that would last until the outbreak of World War II. During this debate, the Italians discovered the difficulties of balancing fascist "prestige" and racial policies with the need to conciliate the Libyan elite. Furthermore, the contemporary political crises in French North African colonies over similar matters tended to confirm the fascist views that no risks could be taken when establishing legal rights and duties for Libyans. An examination of the debate will therefore allow us to see how fascist ideals mixed with a fluid international situation to shape Italian policies of legal status.

While Balbo was merely looking to facilitate the application of a possibility already afforded by the law in December 1934, the backlash against his liberal interpretation placed the whole idea of allowing Libyans to become full Italian citizens into question. The first blow to Balbo's ambitions came when the most respected Italian Orientalist, Carlo Alfonso Nallino, weighed in. According to Nallino, any question of citizenship had to take into account the inherently political nature of Islam, which ensured the primacy of personal status over secular law, and the solidarity of the Muslim world with respect to their adversaries. Given these conditions, Nallino declared that "the project of conferring Italian

575 The naturalized Libyans would be barred from political rights, but would also be exempt from obligatory military service.

citizenship would be a de facto incitement to apostasy and would unleash a storm of recriminations against Italy throughout the Muslim press and in rallies." Nallino also pointed to Tunisia as a failed site of integration, since the few Tunisians who gave up their personal status were ostracized by their communities, causing considerable headaches for French authorities. Furthermore, the Algerian example showed that a liberal policy could lead to the privileging of Libya's Jews, which would only cause further rancor among Muslims. Nallino also pointed out that what Muslims wanted was equality of rights and opportunities to rise to any position, such that any half-measure would only do more political harm than good.[576]

During the winter and early spring of 1936, a slew of opinions from Palazzo Chigi and the Ministry of Colonies backed up Nallino's concerns while adding many others. Most reports pointed to the French experience in Tunisia to demonstrate the dangers of any state initiative that encouraged Muslims to give up their personal status, and an April 1935 report from the Tunis consul Enrico Bombieri describing the political troubles caused by naturalizations seemed to prove such assertions.[577] Thus, the Italian interpretation of France's tentative half-steps towards assimilation was that only a firm policy of legal separation was acceptable in Libya. The opposition to Balbo's proposal was so unanimous

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576 ASMAE, MAI, Affari Politici B. 91, F. Cittadinanza Metropolitana agli Indigeni e Stranieri in Libia, 1932-1938, Letter from Nallino to Under-Secretary for the Colonies, Lessona, "Sull'eventuale concessione della cittadinanza Italiana ai musulmani Libici", 1 January 1936. Nallino's last point is interesting insofar as he must have been aware that there was no possibility of the Italians adopting such a liberal position. But how could the alternative, continual repression of Libyan aspirations, lead to any sort of political and social stability?

577 ASMAE, MAI, Affari Politici, B, 91, F. Cittadinanza, 1932-1938, R. Consolato-Tunis to Ministero delle Colonie, "Naturalizzazioni-Indigeni della Tunisia", 30 April 1935.

that Mussolini refused to even allow its discussion in the Council of Ministers.[578] Yet, there were signs that the citizenship question would have to be addressed in fuller terms if Italy was to further tighten its imperial legal system. At one point, a Foreign Affairs report even admitted that the question of citizenship could not be answered so long as the long-term organization of Libya was still undecided, stating that they must examine if "as a general directive of our colonial policy in Libya, it suits us to favor offering metropolitan citizenship to Muslim Libyans, thereby creating a group of metropolitan citizens of the Arab race and ruled by a personal status derived from the Qurʾan, or to continue favoring the immigration…of metropolitan citizens with the goal of populating Italy's fourth shore with truly Italian elements."[579] Italian policy in the late 1930s hesitated between these two options, though always leaning heavily towards the long-term dominance of an Italian settler population. One should be careful to note that while Balbo was perhaps the most fervent supporter of a liberal policy towards the Libyans, he also tied his reputation to the success of mass-colonization programs.

Following Mussolini's visit to Libya in March 1937, the question of Libyan citizenship came up again. According to Lessona, the much-heralded event had led to "unfounded" rumors that Italy would finally bestow Italian citizenship upon Libyans. Yet Lessona deemed that the occasion warranted a closer examination of the possibility of conferring a form of Italian citizenship that would maintain the Qurʾanic personal status,

578 Ibid., Telegram from Lessona to Balbo, March 1 1936.

579 Ibid., MAE to Ministero delle Colonie, N. 201907, "Concessione di cittadinanza metropolitana in colonia", 18 January 1936.

so long as polygamy was rejected. This Italian citizenship for Libyan Muslims would not be a mere political ploy, but a way of inserting Libyans into the regime: "it cannot be form, but content; not just an empty name without substance, but, in its coordination of rights and duties, an essential spiritual value; not a cumbersome burden or an unimportant label for those who do not desire it or are not worthy of it, but rather the highest honor and invaluable benefit."[580] Clearly, what Lessona had in mind was a program that would provide much fuller rights for the Libyan elite while maintaining the personal status, a reform that could potentially bolster Arab and Muslim support both in Libya and abroad. In order to explore the legal ramifications of such a reform, Lessona requested the opinions of two legal experts, the President of the Council of State, Santi Romano, and the First President of the Appeals Court, Mariano d'Amelio.

The reply of d'Amelio, who was acquainted with colonial and foreign affairs,[581] is a fascinating one for the logic of his recommendations, and for its unacceptability in the eyes of colonial officials. D'Amelio began by rejecting the French model of assimilation, partly because to favor those Libyans who were willing to reject the personal status would be counterproductive. In d'Amelio's words, "the bad Muslim is almost always a bad subject, and it would not be politically wise to transform these into citizens of the highest status [optimo jure]." At the same time, he believed that the fascist corporative system offered a new alternative way forward. If democracies were hesitant to make colonial

580 Ibid., Letter from Lessona to Mariano d'Amelio, 3 May 1937.

581 D'Amelio had served as the head of the Appeals Court in Eritrea from 1905 to 1911 and participated in the Italian delegation to Versailles after World War I.

subjects equal in rights, it was because they feared the power of the right to vote. Yet, fascist politics were vigorously controlled through plebiscites, regime approved lists, and an upcoming Chamber of Fasci and Corporations. Given such control, Italy could easily concede voting rights. "Essentially", d'Ameglio explained,

> the most socially advanced colonial subjects ask for equal political treatment as Italian citizens. If they can convince themselves that such treatment has been conceded to them, all their desires will have been satisfied. The union of the races will have been cemented. For now, it is a matter of examining if such a result can be brought about through corporatism and syndicalism, applied rationally in the colonies.

For d'Amelio, the inclusion of Libyans in the corporatist order in no way required a change to Muslim personal status, even when it came to polygamy.[582] D'Amelio had pointed to a proper fascist policy; the concession of *de jure* and not *de facto* political rights would square the citizenship circle, especially because any Libyan complaints about meaningless elections would be part of an Italian, and not simply colonial political framework. Yet his suggestions were largely ignored, and never formed the central basis for further discussions, possibly due to the threat to Italian prestige and superiority that other hierarchs felt could follow from such a broad extension of political equality. Indeed, the efforts of some corporatist theoreticians in 1931 to push for the inclusion of Libyans had already failed.[583] While minor steps were taken to integrate Libyans into the corporative structure, the regime never placed a priority on this possible integration strategy. This failure also

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582 ASMAE, MAI, Affari Politici, B. 91, F. Cittadinanza, 1932-1938, D'Amelio to Lessona, 21 May 1937.

583 François Dumasy, "Le fascisme est-il un 'article d'exportation'? Idéologie et enjeux sociaux du Parti National Fasciste en Libye pendant la colonisation italienne", *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 55 (July-September 2008), p. 108.

gave the lie to the attempts by colonial experts to claim that Italian colonialism, through its generous social programs and state-control, represented a distinct alternative to an exploitative capitalist model.[584]

Santi Romano's thoughts, on the other hand, fell more in line with the cautious and conservative inclination of Italy's colonial establishment. Romano believed that any forced extension of Italian citizenship upon Libyan Muslims would "disrupt the unity and homogeneity of the Italian nation", while being seen by the Libyans as an "aggression upon their civilization and their traditions, and an offense to their religion, for which it is near apostasy to take the citizenship of a Christian state." Such a policy, Romano argued, would go even further than the French dared, despite the Italians being publicly critical of French assimilation. Not only was this unacceptable to Romano, but he believed that even the piecemeal distribution of citizenship according to the 1934 law should be limited. The only manner still available to encourage "close collaborative relations" was the admission of some Libyans into metropolitan organisms, particularly the parliamentary chambers. Yet Romano even had his doubts about this option.[585]

Lessona heard other voices of caution while serving as the president of the political session of the Third Congress of Colonial Studies held in April 1937 in Florence. Professor Renzo Sertori Salis, in particular, theorized the empire as the highest form of the Italian nation; colonial subjects were merely living in an organic-structure whose essence was

584 For an example of such a claim, see *L'Italia d'Oltremare*, Gaetano Napolitano, "Dal Corporativismo nazionale al corporativismo imperiale", 5 July 1938, pp. 338.
585 ASMAE, MAI, B. 91, F. Cittadinanza, 1932-1938, Romano to Lessona, 30 June 1937.

Italian. As such, for non-Italians, taking on political posts was out of the question, as was inclusion in corporatist institutions. Treating corporatism as a true expression of the interests of producers, Sertori Salis argued that such an eminently national institution could not include the colonized without compromising the principles of Italian rule.[586] Between the more flexible views of d'Amelio and the conservative stances of figures like Romano and Sertori Salis, Lessona clearly sided with the latter, and his brief flirtation with a more liberal policy quickly halted. And indeed, by October of 1937, with some Libyan veterans of the Ethiopian War requesting Italian citizenship from the Libyan Government, the Ministry of Italian Africa felt the need to warn Balbo that if too many Libyans became citizens, the title would lose its "particular and exceptional benefits".[587] Clearly, Romano's suggestions spoke for the colonial authorities in Rome.

Yet a year later, Balbo would make another effort to protect the future role of Libyans in Italian Libya. The key reform Balbo hoped to implement was the replacement of the Libyan Italian citizenship with a new form that would allow for the Libyans to maintain their personal status and achieve legal equality with Italians, so long as they remained in Libya or in other African colonies. Most importantly, Balbo hoped to provide this citizenship to all Libyans living in the coastal provinces.[588] In October 1938, at the Volta Congress in Rome, Balbo presented his vision of the Libyan colony, in which fascism

586 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II., P. 180/11, F. Convegno di Studi Coloniali 1937, Prof. Renzo Sertoli Salis, "Problemi indigeni sul piano dell'Impero", pp. 111-121.

587 ASMAE, MAI, B. 91, F. Cittadinanza, 1932-1938, MAI to Balbo, October 1937.

588 Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East*, p. 148. Those Libyans living in the interior were considered by Balbo to be of a lower civilizational stage and more closely connected to Africa than to the Mediterranean. Segrè, *Italo Balbo*, pp. 390-391.

would create a "Mediterranean" rather than an exclusively Italian civilization. The Libyans of the coastal provinces would then be inserted into the social, economic, and political life of Italy through fascist institutions. The report met with immediate criticism from experienced colonial hands, with one immediate reaction asserting that Balbo's plan to put Libyans on the same footing as Italians would be the equivalent of the Romans destroying their civilization through providing citizenship to barbarians.[589] Figures in the Ministry of Italian Africa with cooler heads also heavily criticized Balbo's proposals.

According to the Director General of Political Affairs, orientalist scholar, and career colonial bureaucrat, Martino Mario Moreno, the proposed reform would do little to change the legal status of Libyans and would only exacerbate frustrated aspirations. On one hand, Moreno believed it would be more productive to replace low-level Italians in non-political administrative posts with Libyans than to give them promises of false equality. On the other, there did exist the possibility of providing a very limited citizenship status that would allow Libyans to exercise their personal status in Italy itself, an option to, as Moreno saw it, "create something juridically new and original." Yet, such an experiment went in an "absolutely opposite direction" from the racial laws targeting Italy's Jews, and would have to wait until racial legislation was finalized.[590] Another official, Tomaso Columbano, pointed to the fact that a proposed right for Libyans to join separate syndicates and corporations was an empty declaration, as these institutions had no real practical existence in Libya. Columbano also feared that Libyans could possibly use their status to

589 ASMAE, MAI Gabinetto Segreto, B. 167, F. Cittadinanza ai Libici, Note, October 11, 1938.
590 Ibid., MAI, Pro-Memoria, "Schema di R.D. sull'annessione della Libia", 30 September 1938.

take on posts as local officials with power over other Italians, an unacceptable prospect given the harsh foundations of Italian rule.[591]

It was consequently no surprise that when Balbo presented his reform to the Grand Council, it was rejected by fascist ultras like Roberto Farinacci and Achillo Starace. According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Galeazzo Ciano, Balbo's proposal clearly contradicted the new set of racial laws. Furthermore, a personal element hindered Balbo's attempt, as Ciano remarked in his diaries how it was "interesting to note how much the Grand Council is opposed to Balbo. The mere fact that the provision was related to Balbo determined its disapproval by a large grouping."[592] Thanks to this rejection, the new citizenship reform would again be limited by legal conservatism and fears of harming Italian racial prestige.

Before the final meeting that would outline the more limited form, Balbo sent a message to the Minister of Italian Africa, Attilio Teruzzi, pleading that the "legitimate aspirations" of Libyans should not be disappointed. Furthermore, for Balbo, Italy had to make a decisive choice with regard to the future of Libyans. Using Mussolini as a cover for his own views, Balbo hoped to convince Teruzzi: "I remind you what Il Duce affirmed: once Libya is an Italian region, we must either make citizens or slaves of the Arabs. I imagine there is no longer anyone who thinks we can make slaves of them; it is necessary therefore to make true citizens, that is to say, that citizenship be of such juridical and moral

591 Ibid., Columbano to Gabinetto MAI, "Schema di R. decreto-legge relative alle provincie libiche", 27 September 1938.
592 Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario, 1937-1943*, ed. Renzo de Felice (Milan, 1998), pp. 201-202.

weight to represent for the Libyan people an authentic civil progression, a stage of evolution that allows for the insertion of this people into the political, social, and economic life of the fourth shore [Libya] with full faith and loyalty."[593]

The Royal Decree of 9 January 1939 formally integrated the coastal provinces of Libya into the Italian kingdom while installing a limited form of Balbo's proposal meant to be limited to Libya's coastal elites. While the new form, called Special Italian Citizenship for Muslim Libyans, allowed for the maintenance of the personal status, it ensured that no Libyan could hold an administrative or military position with power over metropolitan Italians. Furthermore, it was no longer possible to gain Italian citizenship by rejecting the "personal status". All avenues to equality were now cut off. As a result, as the Ministry of Italian Africa officials warned, the reform was largely an empty formula. A controversial addition added to the proposal by the same Ministry that allowed for the participation of these citizens in special Libyan Muslim sections of the Fascist Party was removed.[594] Though the legal right of Libyans to participate in the corporative system was maintained, this would not provide immediate benefits since few corporative structures for Libyans existed at that point. As a result, the decree did little to further Balbo's hopes that the Libyans could be integrated into Italian society. And in terms of Italian racial policy, a pro-memoria for Mussolini assuaged any fears that there would be confusion over the racial hierarchy, arguing that whatever juridical gains could be earned by certain Libyans would

593 ASMAE, MAI Gabinetto Segreto, B. 167, F. Cittadinanza ai Libici, Balbo to Teruzzi, 21 November 1938.
594 Ibid., "Disegno di legge, nuovo schema" and Internal Note, MAI, Undated.

not eliminate their status as Arabs, who would "still remain outside the Arian aggregate whose prestige we intend to protect."[595]

Though initial reports from Egypt indicated the reform was well-received,[596] and Balbo assured Mussolini that even the "inveterate diffidence of those accustomed to many too-often delusional promises…has been decisively dismantled",[597] the Libyans in reality were far from appreciative. From the beginning, there were signs of barely concealed protest. According to a French informant, many Libyans saw right through the Italian attempt at flattery. During a ceremony in which many distinguished Libyans favored by the regime received their certificates of special citizenship, one respected Libyan remarked that "They give us citizenship so that we'll fight our Tunisian brothers", while a religious school teacher asserted that "When the donkey is invited to the banquet, it is so he can transport the water destined for the guests, and receive a blow from the stick."[598]

Further confirmation of Libyan disillusionment came in a report from late 1940. After the death of Balbo in a plane crash in June 1940, Rodolfo Graziani returned to Libya as Governor-General after overseeing the brutal rounding up of Cyrenaican civilians in the early 1930s. In August Mussolini asked Graziani to put together a report summarizing the

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595 ASMAE, MAI Gabinetto Segreto, B. 70, F. Problema della Razza, "Pro-Memoria per il Duce", 28 February 1938.
596 ASMAE, MAI Affari Politici, B. 91, F. Cittadinanza Italiana speciale di mussulmani libici (1938-1943), MAE to MAI, N. 242879, "Cittadinanza speciale ai mussulmani delle Quattro Provincie libiche incorporate nel Regno", 26 December 1938.
597 ASMAE, MAI Gabinetto Segreto, B. 167, F. Cittadinanza ai Libici, Balbo to Mussolini, 22 April 1939.
598 ANOM, GGA Algérie, Tripolitania 36MIOM/104, N. 1967/A, "Citoyenneté concédée aux musulmans", 9 May 1939.

consequences of the new form of citizenship so as to guide future colonial policy. The study was to be done in secret, with only Graziani's most trusted functionaries aware of it, in order to avoid raising any hopes for future reforms, or to indicate that the regime was unsure of what it had previously promulgated.[599] Graziani believed that the abrogation of the ability to attain full Italian citizenship through the foreswearing of the personal status was seen as an insult by Libyans. As for the reform as a whole, Graziani, unlike Balbo, was honest with Mussolini:

> The Muslims, however, who are naturally inclined to consider the practical side of everything, had expected tangible benefits from the joining of the Libyan territory to that of the Kingdom and from the concession of the special citizenship, and did not hide their disappointment for the disillusion they underwent. The more cultivated milieus, though being the subjects of the benefits brought by the new citizenship, did not fail to express their remorse insofar as it represented a step backwards (for example, with respect to the restriction, inexistent beforehand, of those taking on the position of Podestà to only those municipalities with an entirely Libyan population; the institution of obligatory conscription; the eliminated possibility to acquire full metropolitan citizenship, etc.)…The great mass of uncivilized Muslims and of those of low social status, given their cultural level and their consequently scarce political sensibility, not only were incapable of appreciating the true meaning of the provision since they continued to hold that they could interact with metropolitan Italians as absolute equals, but also formulated rather pessimistic conjectures as to the material consequences, particularly with regard to a probable harshening of the fiscal regime and to the extension to the mass of Muslims of obligatory military service. Later on, the question, having lost its immediacy, no longer held the attention of Libyans, who now appear, at the least, indifferent to the issue.

The first of Graziani's points accurately diagnosed one of the core problems with the new forms of citizenship. From the beginning of the occupation, Italy had relied on the "urban notable class" that emerged under the late Ottoman Empire. Some of the figures, like the

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599 ASMAE, MAI Gabinetto Segreto, B. 167, Cittadinanza ai Libici, N. 204890, Teruzzi to Graziani, 15 August 1940.

Qaramanli and Muntasir families, had sided with Italy once they had been shunned by the Young Turks; others hoped to protect their land-holdings and local influence.[600] For these urban notables, the new legislation promised to permanently bar them from rising in the administrative ranks. Furthermore, Graziani pointed out that since many rights previously enjoyed by all Libyans were now transferred to those few who opted for the special citizenship, some Libyans even rejected the new option since they thought Islam did not allow for legal variations between Muslims. And as "special citizenship" did not offer any new tangible benefits, many qualified Libyans did not take up the Italian offer. If the new form of citizenship was meant as a tool to guarantee the loyalty of the urban elites, it had clearly failed. However, Graziani did believe that the Libyan youth who had had contact with fascist institutions were much more receptive, and would constitute a generation more willing to collaborate with Italy. Yet in terms of the new fascist party and corporatist organizations that were supposed to insert these younger Libyans into a fascist society, Graziani had little to say. The new Muslim Association of the Littorio must have had few members, given that its membership was restricted to holders of the special citizenship. Finally, with regard to corporatist organs, Graziani admitted that after two years, only three corporations for Libyans had been established.[601]

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600 Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya*, pp. 65-67, 108-117.

601 According to French intelligence, one of these organizations, a union for dockers in Tripoli, was created to appease a strike. This would indicate that even the tentative measures being taken were reactive in nature rather than part of a broader plan. Furthermore, even the Political Affairs division of the Ministry of Italian Africa had to learn from newspapers that the corporations had been created. ANOM, GGA Algérie, Tripolitania 36MIOM/104, S.E.A., N. 1745/A, "Constitution des premiers syndicats "Musulmans Italiens", 11 July 1939; ASMAE, MAI Affari Politici, B. 59, F. Notizie sulle popolazioni e istituzioni mussulmane in A.O.I. 1939-1941, MAI to

As for recommendations, Graziani suggested that the status-quo be maintained for the time being, given Italy's entry into the war, but that a fruitful reform would be to impose the new form of citizenship on the Libyan population as a whole. As it was, only 2500 certificates of citizenship had been distributed out of a population of 700,000. In short, Graziani wanted to eliminate legal distinctions between Libyans that would hinder their integration into the fascist state, while still maintaining the absolute supremacy of Italians and those judged to be of the Aryan race. At the same time, Graziani admitted that for most Libyans, urban modernity would be out of the question, since the Italian expropriation of the best lands on the coast had pushed them to the interior where they would be engaged in "pastoralism and primitive forms of ambulatory agriculture" for the foreseeable future.[602]

PROTECTING OR DE-POLITICIZING ISLAM?

If the Libyans were to have their national identity subsumed by their inclusion as restricted citizens in the new Italian imperial state, then the support of Islam would serve as a counterbalance; a recognition on the part of the Italians that Libyans would not be content to view themselves primarily as members of an Empire. In the eyes of the Italians, a pro-Islamic stance would not only serve to lessen the blow of their plans to drastically alter the social and economic order of Libya, but would also demonstrate to the world's

Governo Generale della Libia, N. 108185, "Costituzione sindacati musulmani in Libia", 15 July 1939.

602 ASMAE, MAI Affari Politici, B. 91, F. Cittadinanza Metropolitana agli Indigeni e Stranieri in Libia, 1932-1938, Graziani to Mussolini, "Cittadinanza Italiana Speciale per i Libici Musulmani", 22 October 1940.

Muslims that Italy respected Islam. As the transformation of Libya intensified during the governorship of Balbo, so too did the Italian attempt to prove its dedication to the protection of Islam. A close look at the Italian measures, however, indicates an attempt to de-politicize and control Islam through state support. Furthermore, a reification of Islamic aesthetics and traditions served as a tool of commercialism and tourism that authorities hoped would bolster the Libyan economy. Meanwhile, the protection of Islam program sparked a discussion among Italian Orientalists, journalists, and colonial experts about the historical nature of the West's relationship with Islam, and what lessons were to be drawn from that history to ensure the success of Italy's imperial project.

I. Legitimizing Italian Rule

The Italians hoped that their Islamic policy would serve as the primary tool of legitimizing colonial rule in the eyes of Libyans as well as Muslims abroad. In the early 1930s, Italy certainly suffered a lack of legitimacy, as it had used great force to stamp out intense resistance in Libya, while many horrified Arabs and Muslims in other countries had been fairly unanimous in their condemnation of Italian expansionism. Yet, the appeal to Islam and to vague notions of tradition offered a possible means of salvaging Italy's reputation. J.C. Myers' study of South Africa has revealed how the indirect rule of supposedly traditional chiefs constituted a means of legitimizing the Apartheid regime by masking the power of a centralized-state with local actors.[603] The Italians were too suspicious of the Libyans to allow for such forms of indirect rule, but their policy towards

603 J.C. Myers, *Indirect Rule in South Africa: Tradition, Modernity, and the Consuming of Political Power* (Rochester, 2008), pp. 1-15.

Islam performed a similar function of legitimation. By endlessly touting their respect and protection of Islam, the Italians hoped to prevent their opponents from criticizing the regime on religious grounds. In the longer term, creating a depoliticized Islam reliant on the fascist state promised to render the Libyan populace more compliant. These efforts culminated in Mussolini's visit to Libya in March 1937, when he bombastically declared himself the "Protector of Islam", an event that produced much derision on the part of politically active Muslims, journalists, and foreign colonial experts, but nevertheless indicated the lengths the regime dared to go in pushing this particular strategy of legitimation.[604]

However, one should not be shocked that an attempt at imposing a party-line of respect for Islam would face some resentment and disobedience from certain fascists. Just after the march on Rome, fascists in Libya recommended using Islam as a means of tying the population to the land; the preference was for a regime of segregation made sounder through the use of Islam as a means of preventing assimilation.[605] Yet even with a conception of Islam driven by Italian national egoism, intransigent Italian nationalism combined with the presuppositions of Italian superiority over the "backwards" Libyans unsurprisingly served as catalysts for incidents that demonstrated the uphill battle any pro-Islamic program would encounter. With the arrival of the Black Shirts in Libya in 1923 came the methods of squadrismo terror, despite the efforts of Italian officials to control and

604 For Mussolini's 1937 visit, see John L. Wright, "Mussolini, Libya, and the Sword of Islam" in *Italian Colonialism*, pp. 121-129.

605 See Dr. Romagnoli's speech in Derna, ACS, MAI 22/1, B. 2046, F. Fascismo, Cirenaica, PNF Section-Derna to Federzoni, 2 December 1922.

punish the aggressors. In Tripoli, a group of Black Shirts rampaged through the streets chasing Libyans who they falsely believed had attempted to steal rifles from their barracks. Amid other excesses, some barged into a mosque in pursuit of Libyans seeking refuge, causing those in prayer to flee in panic.[606] Even worse was an episode in Homs in September 1923, in which fifteen Black Shirts broke into a mosque at night, stealing whatever they could find and defecating inside as a sign of their contempt.[607] In this case, the guilty parties were sent back to Italy; hardly a severe punishment given Italy's claims to respect Islam, as Angelo Del Boca has pointed out.[608]

Though Italian authorities discouraged such transgressions, little was made of Italian official respect for Islam until the governorship of Italo Balbo (1934-1940). Whereas Rodolfo Graziani sought to instill fear in Libyans through harsh punitive actions and thinly veiled threats, Balbo hoped to play the role of an Italian Lyautey; that of a modernizer with great admiration for Islamic traditions and culture. Though Balbo encountered resistance to his attempts to grant more meaningful rights for Libyans from fellow fascist hierarchs, the policy of supporting Islam had a broad consensus in Italian colonial circles. Despite Mussolini's early reservations about "exaggerating Arabophilism" in Italian propaganda,[609] a flurry of pamphlets and booklets sent out abroad extolled the

606 ACS, Ministero dell'Africa Italiana 22/1, B. 2046, F. Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale nelle colonie, Colombo to Gabinetto Tripoli, 23 September 1923.
607 ACS, Ministero dell'Africa Italiana 22/1, B. 2046, F. Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale nelle colonie, Liet. Col. Contessini-Homs to Gabinetto Tripoli, 25 September 1923.
608 Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, pp. 29-30.
609 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/34, F. Articoli di stampa, 1937-1940, Promemoria for Minister of Colonies, "Servizio stampa e propaganda in Libia", 24 October 1935.

virtues of Italy's benevolent policies, while the pan-Islamist Shakib Arslan (1869-1946), working with Italian authorities, compared Italian Libya favorably to French North African colonies on account of Italian largess and tolerance with regards to Islam.

Arslan was a particularly interesting ally of Italy. From Geneva, where he ran a pan-Islamic paper, *La Nation Arabe*, Arslan advocated pan-Islamic solidarity in the anti-colonial struggle as well as reform of Islam in the tradition of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad ʿAbduh.[610] Arslan's kind words for Italy and support of their Ethiopian campaign has long sparked debate. Did the financially struggling Arslan betray his principles for Italian subsidies? Did he see Italy as a useful tool to free North Africa and the Levant from British and French control? His biographer sides with the latter explanation; subsidies from Italy would go back into his political projects, not personal expenses, as Arslan was living in poverty in the mid to late 1930s.[611] Yet one can envisage the possibility that Arslan saw the values of fascist Italy as akin to his own pan-Islamic worldview. In his most popular book, *Our Decline and its Causes* (1930), Arslan explained what Muslims could do to assert themselves again on the world stage. Defining Islam as a religion of action, and not of passivity, Arslan argued that the glory of the Islamic world would only return through sacrifice, by "expending bodily energy and material wealth". For Arslan, Europe was not powerful because of its science or rationality, but for its strong national, religious, and ethnic traditions, which inspired it to tremendous sacrifices, as seen

610 William L. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West: Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin, 1985), pp. 7-16.
611 Ibid., pp. 145-154.

in the Great War. Maintaining the willingness to sacrifice for such values kept a people strong, and a lack of belief would lead to "atheism…and a life of licence and unrestrained libertinism."[612] In Arslan's fairly dismal view of history, Muslims could only compete by out-sacrificing Europeans.

Aside from the possibility that Arslan may have admired the fascist focus on sacrifice and disdain for atheism, the Italian policy of respect for Islam seems to have constituted a basis for his support. Maintaining the Islamic faith and values was Arslan's ultimate objective, as no revival could occur otherwise. Consequently, it was no surprise that Arslan became an international champion of Islam when the French unsuccessfully attempted to replace shariʿa law with French civil law in Moroccan Berber communities in 1930. Arslan interpreted the move as a French effort to assimilate the Berbers and convert them to Catholicism. Until his pro-Italian turn in 1933-1934, Arslan similarly depicted Italian rule as primarily focused on destroying Islam in order to settle Christian colonists. But with the end of military operations and the beginning of the Balbo era, Arslan changed course. Though Mussolini rejected Arslan's requests for real Libyan autonomy, it is possible that the Italian program of respect for Islam did satisfy Arslan; as long as Italy did not assimilate Libyans, the basis for future independence and Islamic revitalization would remain untouched.[613]

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612 Shakib Arslan, *Our Decline and its Causes: A diagnosis of the symptoms of the downfall of Muslims*, trans. M.A. Shakoor (Lahore, 1962), pp. 10-27, 70-75, 130-133.

613 Cleveland, *Islam Against the West*, pp. 96-102, 145.

Though Arslan suffered for his defense of Italy, he was an important catch for the Italians, whose propaganda efforts responded to the work of Libyan exiles, who spread word of Italian atrocities and disrespect toward Islam. Organizations like the Executive Committee of Tripolitanian and Cyrenaican Communities, run by Bashir al-Saʿdawi from Damascus, made contacts around the Islamic world to rally opinion against Italy and formulate the bases of a Libyan nationalism. Meanwhile the Arab Bond Society in Egypt provided a platform for Libyans to state their case to Egyptians and other Arabs.[614] If the Italians wanted to improve their relations with other Arab nations, they would have to respond to as many of the Libyan exiles' critiques as possible without compromising Italian sovereignty. Arslan's early conversion to a pro-Italian stance may have helped convince the Italians that others would follow if they initiated enough reforms, and provided proper publicity.

The bulk of Italian gestures in favor of Islam in Libya occurred between 1935 and 1936. These included the construction and refurbishing of mosques, the handing over of confiscated Waqf properties to Libyans for administration, state support for certain Islamic practices, and the establishment of an Islamic College in Tripoli. Though sources for Italian administration in Libya are scarce, an examination of these measures will reveal the Italian strategy to employ Islam as a tool of political control and as a means of gaining more support from Muslims abroad.

614 Baldinetti, *Origins*, pp. 69-97.

Though they confiscated land and property from the Senussi order, Italians could point to their support of Waqfs with pride. Claudia Gazzini has argued that whereas the French demanded written proof of property from Algerians to facilitate their confiscation of Waqf lands, the Italians were more generous during the early years of their occupation. This was partly because fewer agricultural lands were held by Tripolitanian Waqfs, and Italian colonization efforts had yet to start demanding land. But little changed under fascist-rule. By 1939, the 1917 statutes regarding Waqfs were extended to all the Libyan provinces, including Fezzan. Though the Italians did not expropriate Waqf property, they did ensure that the Governor would have broad control over the institutions, with administration being left to Libyan notables.[615]

Restoring and building mosques also served as a particularly useful technique for the Italians. At the time of Mussolini's visit to Libya, Italians could boast that they had built twenty-one new mosques in Tripolitania.[616] By trumpeting their support for mosques through propaganda, Italians hoped to deny charges that they had suppressed freedom of religion.[617] In addition to foreign propaganda, there were also domestic interests at stake. In Cyrenaica, where the Italians had dismantled many Senussi zawiyas (confraternities) and confiscated their properties,[618] new mosques could serve as sites of religious

615 Claudia Gazzini, "'Saranno rispettati come per il passato': La politica coloniale italiana e le fondazioni pie in Libia", *Quaderni Storici*, Vol. 44, 132 (2009), pp. 671-676.

616 *Il Mediterraneo*, Amedeo Tosti, "Italia ed Islam in Libia", March 1937.

617 For example, several Egyptian newspapers ran an Italian news brief concerning a ceremony for the opening of a restored mosque in Beda-Littoria in 1938. The brief unsurprisingly focused on Italian magnanimity. ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/34, MAI, Affari Politici to Governo della Libia, N. 69671, "Propaganda all'estero delle opera del Regime in Libia", 14 October 1938.

618 Cresti, *Non desiderare*, pp. 95-96.

observation under closer state supervision. Balbo, fearing a possible resurgence of Senussi influence, rejected the re-establishment of Libyan zawiyas. Instead, he pointed to the construction in Cyrenaica of five new mosques and the restoring of two others at a total expense of 290,000 lire as proof that the government was doing enough to support Muslims without risking a return of Senussi institutions.[619] Several new mosques would replace those destroyed or damaged during the war against the Senussi, and in the case of Derna, the new mosque was built next to a military barracks.[620] Italians either argued that Senussi zawiyas were purely political groupings with no religious content, or constituted a backwards and corrupted form of Islam that had to be suppressed in favor of the modernizing, Orthodox movements.[621]

Though the Italians were sure to prevent the Senussi from challenging their sovereignty, they took a more practical line when it came to the question of modernization, and facilitated the introduction of new norms in the practicing of Islam in Libya. Gazzini has reconstructed Italian legal theory in Libya as one that differed from British and French practices. Instead of drawing up colonial codes that codified local law, the Italians allowed judges to exercise jurisprudence with the help of Muslim and Jewish scholars to formulate

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619 ASMAE, MAI Vol. I, P. 91/22, F. Paesi arabi Periodo 1925-1935, Balbo to Lessona, N. 62588, 2 February 1936.

620 ACS, MAI 22/1, B. 1950, F. 1, Public Works Derna, "Relazione", 26 April 1936.

621 Roberto Cantalupo argued that once the Turks had left Libya, the Senussi resistance "lost its religious character, its spiritual content, its pathos; endowed with neither Libyan patriotism or Arab nationalism, it minimized itself and became vulgar, reducing itself to the proportions of an artificial, mercantile, brigandish, and blackmailing foolhardy organization." *L'Italia Musulmana*, p. 162. For an Italian critique of the Senussi as representing a corrupted form of Islam, see, *Cirenaica Illustrata*, Frances de Biase, "Spiragli sul mondo arabo: Sulle cosidetti confraternite religiose mussulmane", September 1933.

new laws that would respect local traditions when not in direct contradiction with Italian positive law. Though it began in the liberal period, this flexible system continued under the fascists.[622] Balbo also oversaw significant reforms to the practice of Islam in Libya. Since the remaining documentation on the Italian administration of Libya is unfortunately quite scarce, we must piece together what some of these reforms were. In two meetings with Libya's qaḍis, Balbo agreed to several measures that would abolish practices that, as *L'Azione Coloniale* stated, were "absolutely not permitted by the Qurʾan, because they are recognized to have pagan origins." These included a ban on fakirs and the wearing of traditional tribal ponytails, as well as increased age requirements for marriage. In the case of the religious ban on ponytails, Balbo added hygiene concerns to his consent, declaring that such Libyans would not be allowed to enter government offices.[623] There were other changes; during funeral ceremonies, women were no longer allowed to ululate.[624] And during Ramaḍan, the government enforced store hours and banned the sale of alcohol to Muslims,[625] while also punishing those who failed to conform to such norms in order to "do away with impiety and bad examples."[626] But unsurprisingly, the Italian "respect" for

622 Claudia Gazzini, "When Jurisprudence Becomes Law: How Italian Colonial Judges in Libya Turned Islamic Law and Customary Practice into Binding Legal Precedent", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 55 (2012), pp. 746-770.

623 *L'Azione Coloniale*, "Notiziario Libico", "Abolizione di pratiche pagane", 5 August 1937; ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/32, F. Notiziari Politici, 1935-1936, Notiziario 20 September 1935.

624 ASMAE, MAI Vol II., P. 150/34, F. Articoli di Stampa, 1937-1940, Translation of *Barid Barqa* Article, "La civiltà e la politica della colonizzazione", 8 March 1937.

625 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/33, F. Notiziario settimanale politico-amministrativo, N. 12, 6 December 1935.

626 *Libia, Rivista Mensile Illustrata*, Gino Cerbella, 'Ramadan: Mese di penitenza per i musulmani", September 1940.

Ramaḍan served as a cover for propaganda; in 1939, authorities used the occasion to celebrate the opening of a Libyan agricultural village, to honor Libyan notables with decorations, and to distribute subsidies in events designed to foster loyalty.[627]

It is likely that Balbo hoped to placate the reformist ʿUlema of Libya through these measures. A fascist expert on Islam and admirer of Balbo, Gino Cerbella explained how "the most cultivated and judicious figures in the Muslim world admonish the use of exterior forms in certain mystic sects that end up in vulgar spectacle, contrary to all sense of public propriety [civismo]." Furthermore, he quoted the Egyptian reformer Muhammad Ferid Wajdi at length, explaining how Europeans could hardly be expected to understand true Islam so long as they were exposed to its unorthodox historical accretions.[628] James McDougall has shown how Algerian ʿUlema expressed similar concerns that un-Islamic practices would solidify European views of Islam as backward.[629] The Italians then hoped to get ahead of the issue by supporting, and even taking credit for a modernization of Islam.

The foundation of an Islamic college in Tripoli promised to further the goals of reforming Libyan Islam. Yet the institution was the result of several proposals that were primarily concerned with the possibility that such a school could produce potential political enemies. A recommendation by the Italian Legate in Egypt for the creation of a Center for Islamic Studies in Italy was refused by the Ministry of Colonies on the grounds that

627 ANOM, GGA Algérie, Tripolitania 36MIOM/104, S.E.A. "Note de Renseignements: Politique indigène en Libye", 3 January 1940.
628 Cerbella, *Fascismo e Islamismo* (Tripoli, 1938), pp. 31-35.
629 Jams McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 110-135.

colonial subjects studying in Italy were uprooted and consequently "absorbed what is least good" from Western civilization.[630] Any new school would have to be based in Libya, where there was already a need for such an institution. In 1926, the Italians had closed the primary Islamic center in Libya, the Senussi controlled Jaghbub school. Despite recommendations that Jaghbub could host a new school, this time protected from "fanaticism and xenophobia" by trustworthy teachers,[631] Balbo and Mussolini had already opted for a new location in Tripoli. In early 1935, a former Iranian Prime Minister, Zia'eddin Tabatabaee suggested to Mussolini that Italy would increase its reputation in the Islamic world if it established a theological school.[632] Mussolini passed the idea on to Balbo, and by January 1936, the Islamic College of Tripoli had opened. For the Italians, the purpose of the school was to educate the Libyan Muslim and administrative elite within Libya,[633] so as not to run the risks inherent in sending Libyan students to Tunisia and Egypt for their schooling. The regime, however, spun the college as a chance for Libyans to attain respectable civil posts (which in reality were severely restricted), and to take on positions in Shariʿa courts. As a result, the college also served as a resource for children of the urban elites that the Italians had been cultivating for decades. Yet the institution struggled to find

630 ASMAE, Libia B. 7, F. Fondazione di una moschea e di un centro di studi mussulmani a Roma, MAE to Cairo Legation, "Costruzione di una moschea a Roma", 28 October 1934.
631 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 180/16, F. Al-Azhar, Ministero delle Colonie, "Appunto per il signor direttore generale", 15 January 1936.
632 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/31, F. Scuola superiore islamica 1935, Mussolini to Balbo, May 1935.
633 For Balbo's policy of favoring the education of a small Libyan elite, see Federico Cresti, "Per uno studio delle "elites" politiche nella Libia indipendente: La formazione scolastica (1912-1942)" in *Studi Storici*, Vol. 41 (January 2000), pp. 121-158.

capable teachers and prepared students. Citing contacts with Orthodox Libyan Muslims, the French consul in Tripoli asserted that the poor education standards of Libya ensured that little would be achieved through the college, despite having considerable Waqf sums to draw upon.[634] The French consul believed the real goal of the college was to strengthen the state's patronage of the "three-hundred elite Libyan families" that exercised their power as administrators of Islamic property and justice.[635] Indeed, the Italian strategy of cultivating the Libyan urban elites required tools like the college to ensure that these families could provide opportunities for their children given the Italian monopolization of administrative positions. To this end, students at the Islamic College were enrolled in the GAL to strengthen their loyalty to fascism.[636]

While some Italian measures therefore appeared to support the modernizing Islamic trends, at other moments colonial authorities displayed a willingness to support rural traditions. For instance, when thousands of pilgrims came to the oasis of Taourga for an annual pilgrimage to the tomb of a local saint, the local Provincial Commissar took advantage of the event to communicate the provisions taken by Italy in favor of Libyans and Muslims.[637] The Taourga pilgrimage was not an isolated incident of the Italians tolerating local Islamic traditions for their own reasons. In Misurata, a zerda, or popular

634 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Oran, 51/55, F. Situation du monde Musulman, Boucoiran to Peyrouton, Flandin, N. 52, "A.S. de l'Ecole supérieure de culture islamique de Tripoli", 20 May 1936.

635 ANOM, GGA Algérie, Tripolitania 36MIOM/104, Tripoli Consul to Minister of Foreign Affairs, N. 31 "Politique indigène du 'Maréchal Balbo'", 10 April 1937.

636 Cerbella, *Fascismo*, pp. 38-39 (f.)

637 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/32, F. Notiziari politici, 1934-1935, Governo della Libia to Ministro delle Colonie, N. 2190, "Notiziario informazioni Settembre XIII", 30 September 1935.

festival, was the occasion to incorporate fascism into traditional Islamic life. In front of a collection of civil authorities and Libyan notables, the local Libyan students saluted Mussolini, sang, and gave a gymnastics demonstration before the brightest of the indigent students received prizes and gifts.[638] And while the Italians were hesitant to support the Senussi order, they bragged about their efforts to conserve the oasis of Jaghbub, where the tomb of the Senussi founder was located. Whereas the Senussi leadership had left the oasis in "total abandonment", the Italians claimed to have returned it to its "former splendor".[639] Clearly, the state had no issues encouraging pilgrimages and traditional North African forms of Islam so long as these contained no political element besides that of extolling the regime.

Yet the basic contradiction between Italian claims to superiority and the respect Italians owed to Islamic culture continued to create tensions. In one instance, Balbo expelled a military chaplain from Libya for giving a speech to a congregation in which he declared that Muhammad's ideas would one day be revealed to be false. Since the chaplain delivered the speech in a public square, Libyans overheard his derogatory comments, which, according to Balbo, also upset several Italians.[640] Even in 1939, Balbo still had to reproach local administrators for allowing construction companies to destroy Muslim

638 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/33, F. Notiziari Politici, 1936-1937, Governo della Libia to MAI, N. 1170, "Notiziario informazioni", 30 June 1937.

639 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/34, F. Articoli di stampa, 1934-1936, Governo della Libia, Direzione degli Affari CIvili e Politici to Ministero delle Colonie, N. 653, "Richiesta di dati e riproduzioni fotografiche per articoli sulla oasi di Giarabub", 13 January 1936.

640 ASMAE, MAI Gabinetto Segreto, B. 200, F. Tripolitania Varie A-Z, Governo della Libia to Ministero delle Colonie, N. 2820, 12 December 1935.

cemeteries. Dismayed by the fact that the dug-up bones were "thrown away, or piled up and left out in the open, without alerting those who could care for their transferal", Balbo complained that such actions showed a "lack of respect for the moral and religious sentiments of Muslims that indicated scarce intelligence and no political understanding."[641] Given the importance of cemeteries as sites of political contestation in Tunisia in the 1930s, the failure of the Italian authorities to protect such sacred spaces indicates the limits of Italian respect as practiced on a daily level.

The behavior of Italians, no doubt exacerbated by the regime's racial policies, continued to bely the official line of respect. According to French reports, Italian functionaries and military officers so commonly showed their disdain for Arabic that visitors had to gain the trust of Libyans before the latter would speak their own language.[642] Following a 1942 PNF report that even the Libyan elites were subject to frequent humiliations, the Minister of Colonies Attilio Teruzzi proposed using the PNF and police organs to repress such behavior, even leaving open the possibility of expelling Italians who risked public order by criticizing Libyans.[643] Consequently, the racism shown towards Libyans, which was implicitly encouraged by the constant state reminders of Italian superiority, had to be kept within acceptable boundaries through party organizations. Italian rule in Libya would end before a new party-based initiative could attempt to instill

641 ACS, Ministero dell'Africa Italiana 22/1 B. 1950, F. 9, Balbo to Prefects Tripoli, Misurata, Benghazi, Derna, "Cimiteri e tombe musulmane", 26 May 1939.
642 ANOM, GGA Algérie, Tripolitania 36MIOM/104, "L'Italie en Libye", Conference for Active and Reserve Officers in Constantine, 11 February 1939.
643 ASMAE, MAI Affari Politici, B. 92, F. Rapporti fra nazionali e native in Tripolitania, 1942, Teruzzi to Graziani, N. 304342, "Rapporti fra nazionali e native in Tripolitania", 30 October 1942

manners in Italians. Yet these final efforts reveal the impossibility of resolving the tension between notions of superiority and "Latin" universalism that plagued Italian imperial doctrines. How exactly to treat the Libyan "Other" was therefore a question upon which the regime struggled to provide a clear answer. While recent studies on Italian imperialism have focused on propaganda directed towards Muslims, it is critical to examine the differing ways that Italians represented Libyans, and Islam more broadly, to themselves.

II. Friend or Enemy? Italian Debates on Arabs and Muslims

While the Italian state sought to placate Muslims in Libya and abroad, Italian academics and journalists debated whether the Mediterranean was a space for collaboration or conflict between East and West. Each interpretation suggested different courses for Italian policy concerning the treatment of Muslims: either a policy aimed at establishing the grounds for cooperation, or a harsher policy based on the assumption that Muslims constituted the historical enemy.

When recounting Libyan history, a common theme stemming from the French-Italian privileging of Latin influences in North Africa was the denigration of Islamic contributions. The contempt that derived from such a position could be quite clear: in an article by an influential fascist hierarch in Benghazi reviewing the local ruins of several civilizations, that of Muslims was accused of "leaving nothing in Cyrenaica but tombs…signs of death among so much pulsating life, the only advance of a civilization that deflowered Cyrenaica through destruction, without knowing how to substitute a more

creative capacity for that of Greece and Rome".[644] Though oft-repeated, the charges of Islamic decadence in Libya were outweighed by those who believed in an eternal struggle between East and West. Mario Missiroli, an influential journalist, provided a typical reading of this form of Mediterranean history in an article that asserted that the Crusades, despite consisting of a series of military disasters, served as a lesson for the modern West in how the impulse to expansionism toward the Orient would lead to "the triumph of millennial values".[645] In this view, the Mediterranean served as a space for periodic Western rejuvenations. And when applied to contemporary affairs, such a perspective generally assumed that Islam was an ally of Bolshevism in the struggle against a West facing a choice between decadence or regeneration. The left-fascist journalist Ugo D'Andrea expressed this view by depicting Bolshevism as representative of a typically "Asiatic" opposition to Latin Dionysian and Germanic Faustian civilization. Once again, according to D'Andrea, the "East and West are battling like two currents that rise and fall along the coasts of the Mediterranean countries." Rome had struck first by uniting the Mediterranean, but beaten back by the "Arab tide", before the West re-asserted itself in the nineteenth century. Now it was the turn of Asia, in the form of an alliance between Islamism and Bolshevism.[646]

Others questioned the confluence of Bolshevik and Islamist interests. In the most influential fascist periodical on colonial affairs, *L'Azione Coloniale*, Genesio Eugenio Del

644 *Africa Italiana*, Dante Maria Tuninetti, "Dal Gebel al mare", June 1932.
645 *Il Mediterraneo*, Mario Missiroli, "Le Crociate: Riscossa della Civiltà Mediterranea", 17 December 1938.
646 *Il Mediterraneo*, Ugo D'Andrea, "Fascismo e Comunismo nel Mediterraneo", August 1936.

Monte argued that while some Muslim leaders wanted to use Moscow as a tool, the cooperation between Moroccans and Franco proved that Islam was compatible with fascism and not communism.[647] The young Ruggero Orlando, who later became a socialist journalist, argued that the Arab world was not "passive", but rapidly asserting itself. While Italy had to find common ground to introduce this world into the "concert of Europe", Orlando believed that the Arabs' "traditional sense of justice" would lead them to reject the "cynical contempt of certain values…[of] European imperialists and businessmen condemned to moral and material decline", and thereby recognize the importance of cooperation with Italy.[648] Taking this argument further, V. Branzoli Zappi saw Arab Muslims as the foremost allies of Italy in a struggle against a

> Western world deprived of its function, darkened by Jewish-Asiatic communist theories, by moral confusion, by neo-paganism, a world in which fascist Italy is today the bulwark of Christian and Roman civilization. Now, opposite the frightful darkness of the North and the dissolving forces of Bolshevism, the famous 'infidels' of the time of the Crusades are a still healthy force, capable of resisting the threatening disintegration. We are in this sense much closer to the Muslims of the Philippines than to the Marxists of Barcelona; in Muslims we recognize the sense of hierarchy, of discipline, and social solidarity, the love of a daring spirit, the cult of the family and God, in short, the prevalence of spiritual values.[649]

By transposing the quintessential fascist values onto Muslims, such arguments hoped to convince Italians that in a global struggle between the forces of "disintegration" and "health", Italy must find new allies. Muslims were then not the only target for propaganda

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647 *L'Azione Coloniale*, Eudemon [pseudonym for Del Monte], "Il comunismo contro l'Islam", 22 April 1937.

648 *L'Azione Coloniale*, Ruggero Orlando, "Il Mondo Arabo e il Mediterraneo", 9 May 1937.

649 *Etiopia (Latina)*, V. Branzoli Zappi, "Il Fascismo e il mondo musulmano", August-September 1937.

that collapsed the distinctions between fascism and Islam. Italians would have to be comfortable with an alliance with Muslims as well.

A supporter of such an alliance was Gino Cerbella, a fascist who studied Islam and contributed articles on North African folklore and culture for reviews. In his 1938 book, *Fascismo e Islamismo*, Cerbella hoped to convince Italians that Mussolini's pro-Islamic policy would be a profound and historical one. To start, Cerbella outlined the similarities between fascism and Islam, drawing several parallels between the two; both established order out of anarchy, had heroic leaders, sought to unify their communities, and held universal aspirations. In his enthusiasm, Cerbella even described the eighth and twentieth centuries as "pillars of a bridge of light, leading to the future of humanity".[650] Most importantly though, the alliance of fascism and Islam would be built around "a common enemy to defeat: bolshevism"; while Italians would fight Bolshevism in Europe, Muslims would present "a human wall of 250 million people". Cerbella argued that the Muslim devotion to spirituality over materialism, to tradition over the novel, to a theocracy over a secular state, precluded any confluence of interests between Islam and communism. Communist attempts to encourage anti-colonial resistance would only lead to nationalist movements strongly shaped by Islam. [651] The Italians would not have to fear a pan-Islamic or pan-Arab state since the national states created after World War I would not cede their

650 Cerbella, *Fascismo*, pp. 11-16.
651 Ibid., pp. 51-86.

sovereignty.[652] The shift towards nationalism in the Islamic world would then redound to the benefit of Italians and help secure their alliance against Bolshevism.[653]

Given Westerners' common use of Islam as an epithet for fascism, partly to explain away the phenomenon as something separate from the West, as Reinhard Schulze has demonstrated, it is interesting that Cerbella did not argue for an equivalence of the two, but of a profound similarity.[654] Whereas others saw both fascism and Islam as a "political religion",[655] Cerbella distinguished between Islam's "theocratic state" and Mussolini's "theocracy of the state".[656] As such, Islam did not explain fascism, which, from a fascist perspective, could hardly be removed from the deep roots of Italian history. Rather, constructing an image of Islam that paralleled that of fascism served to place Muslims among Italy's friends. Of course, the fascist view of Islam that privileged whatever elements could be compared to fascism was as opportunistic as those of other Europeans, but the key goal was to lay the groundwork for geopolitical collaboration. Thus, writers like Branzoli-Zappi and Cerbella hoped to employ the friend-enemy distinction to convince Italians that an alliance with Muslims was in their best interest. The threat of Bolshevism

652 Cerbella made a distinction between cultural and political pan-Islam and pan-Arabism, with the former still likely to have a strong influence. Ibid., pp. 124-125.
653 The triumph of nationalism in the Muslim world was, for Cerbella, a sign of the intuitive respect and admiration Muslims held for Mussolini and fascism. Ibid., pp.134-135.
654 Reinhard Schulze, "Islamofascism: Four Avenues to the Use of an Epithet" *Die Welt des Islams*, 52 (2002), pp. 290-330.
655 Ibid., p. 307-308.
656 Cerbella, *Fascismo*, p. 14. Subtle distinctions such as this raise the question of how exactly Italy would be equipped to rule over Muslims, questions Cerbella never addresses.

in particular, which became much more central to fascist propaganda in the wake of the Spanish Civil War,[657] served as a useful incentive to support a pro-Islamic policy.

If fascism needed to maintain its historical autonomy from Islam despite the desire for an alliance, it was still possible to engage in historical revisionism that questioned the inclusion of Arabs and Muslims in an East destined to combat the West. The young colonial expert Mario Dorato, who would later become the head of the Istituto Coloniale in post-fascist Italy,[658] argued that the common understanding of Islam as the historic enemy of the West was mistaken. Not only did Muslims take on elements of Latin civilization, but they developed their own as well: "It was the Arabs from Cordoba, Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo that spread the light of a most elevated literary, scientific, and artistic culture, that introduced so many words into our language, that through their activity and industriousness created the opulent irrigated gardens of Spain and stupendous architectural masterpieces, such as Cordoba's mosque and Granada's Alhambra." Dorato argued that the distrust of Islam derived from the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks and Barbary pirates, and not Arabic and Islamic civilization. By pinning the blame on Turks and pirates, the latter of which was "in no way typically or essentially Muslim", Dorato could present a history with far fewer conflicts. And though Dorato recognized that the Crusades were crucial to a romantic self-understanding of Europeans, he also admitted that the episode was "one of

657 Marla Stone, "Italian Fascism's Wartime Enemy and the Politics of Fear", in Michael Laffan and Max Weiss (eds.), *Facing Fear: The History of an Emotion in Global Perspective* (Princeton, 2012), pp.118-120.

658 Dorato, Mario, *Biographie,* Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, http://www.academieoutremer.fr/academiciens/fiche.php?aId=1019

the most colossal wastes of human life and wealth in recorded history", which saw innocent Syrian Arabs become "victims of an authentic aggression by the armed forces of feudal Europe". Dorato concluded that Islam and fascism shared a dedication to a "single and eternal Law", and spiritual values of faith and discipline. Once the two forces had rid themselves of corrupting foreign ideologies, they would find common ground.[659]

In a conference held during the 1937 Colonial Congress, the Orientalist Michelangelo Guidi made a similar attack on a historical reading that privileged conflict at the expense of collaboration. Guidi hoped that revealing the lesser-known cultural contacts through the study of Islam would inform Italy's political and cultural elites, and thereby provide a basis for the resumption of long-lasting historical trends of cooperation. By rewriting a history of wars into one of cultural transmissions, and in particular, of the Islamic conservation of ancient thought, Guidi hoped to link Orientalism directly to the geopolitical interests of fascism, and thereby receive more state support.[660] Guidi was not alone in his attempt to bring East and West together through a re-examination of the past. In the same conference, Cerbella attempted to uncover lost cultural similarities by arguing that the games played by Libyan youth in Tripoli's Qurʾanic schools were similar to those played by Italian youth.[661] Once the regime began to make preparations to teach Arabic in Italian middle-schools, Cerbella pushed for a re-writing of Islamic history in Italian text-

659 *L'Azione Coloniale*, Mario Dorato, "La Verità storica sull'Islam Nemico o amico di Roma?", 30 December 1937.
660 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 180/11, F. Convegno Studi Coloniali 1937, *Atti del Terzo Congresso di Studi Coloniali, Vol. II, I Sezione: Politica*, Michelangelo Guidi "Gli Studi Musulmani e la Politica Italiana", pp. 121-129.
661 Ibid., *Terzo Congresso di Studi Coloniali, Programma Definitivo*, p. 109.

books. According to Cerbella, such reforms would allow Italians with little knowledge to gain the understanding that experts had on Islam.[662] Some non-experts, like the decorated military doctor Alfredo Bucciante, seemed to get a head-start on fulfilling Cerbella's wish. Bucciante contributed to the push to emphasize the merits of the Islamic world with an article in *Il Mediterraneo* on Arab medicine in which he credited Arabs with conserving and developing Greek medicine, as well as establishing the basis for modern, scientific pharmacy.[663]

Others sought to reconcile Italian Catholic culture and religion with Islam. As early as 1932, the Orientalist Giuseppe Macaluso-Aleo sought to refute Dante's portrayal of Muhammad; a notable criticism given the fascist figuring of Dante as father of Italy. Macaluso-Aleo argued that Dante's condemnation of Muhammad as a "sower of discord" was a result of medieval ignorance concerning Islam. Given Dante's placement of Saladin, Ibn Rushd, and Ibn Sina in Limbo, Macaluso-Aleo believed that the Florentine poet would not be averse to a more respectful treatment of Muhammad if he knew the truth of Islam as finally understood by modern Westerners thanks to intellectuals like Thomas Carlyle.[664] The presence of such arguments in fascist publications showed an early willingness of regime actors to permit arguments that encouraged a cultural rapprochement and more tolerance on the part of Italians. And Orientalists were not alone in these efforts: In a series of articles for *L'Italia d'Oltremare*, the Catholic writer Giulio Castelli emphasized the

662 *L'Italia d'Oltremare*, Gino Cerbella, "La lingua araba in Italia: Aspetti della cultura islamica", 5 January 1939.
663 *Il Mediterraneo*, Alfredo Bucciante, "La medicina e gli arabi", 20 October 1938.
664 *Cirenaica Illustrata*, Giuseppe Macaluso-Aleo, "Dante e Maometto", November 1932.

Islamic respect for Jesus and Mary, as well as the similarities between Allah and the Christian God. In an attempt to reverse "the absurd theory of an unbridgeable gap between the Muslims and us", Castelli hoped to convince readers that Italians had an obligation to cease giving offense to Muslims and instead encourage them to become even better Muslims as a means to more peaceful relations.[665] Castelli also pointed out that the Vatican was moving towards a policy of understanding Islam rather than proselytization despite some residual opposition, through organizations like the Jesuits' Lega degli Amici dell'Oriente Islamico, and argued that the new stance would strengthen the political goals of Italian imperialism.[666] Finally, Castelli believed that an alliance between Christians and Muslims was necessary in the face of the rational and atheistic forces of Western laicism and Russian Bolshevism. The conflict-ridden past between the two religions had "vanished, blown away by the powerful winds of modern civilization",[667] creating new friend-enemy distinctions. Castelli's desire for religious reconciliation under the aegis of Italian worldly power is an instructive example of how even some Catholic intellectuals had accommodated their views to fascist expansionist aims.

Some Catholics also hoped that the spiritualty of Muslims would serve as an incentive to Italians to take their religion more seriously. For the former socialist Pio Gardenghi, Ramadan in particular brought about "an almost mystical atmosphere" that

665 *L'Italia d'Oltremare*, Giulio Castelli, "Le affinità fra il vangelo e il Corano: Per una durevole e proficua Intesa fra cristiani e islamici", 20 July 1938.
666 *L'Italia d'Oltremare*, Giulio Castelli, "La Chiesa Cattolica si accinge a rettificare le sue posizioni nei confronti con l'Islam", 5 January 1939.
667 *L'Italia d'Oltremare*, Giulio Castelli, "Un sempre più vasto campo si apre alla Chiesa cattolica per un prossimo riavvicinamento all'Islam", 5 June 1939.

served to remind both Christians and Muslims of the divine and eternal values of God that would outlast all "turbulent ideologies" and "prideful scientific theories".[668] In a more direct appeal for Catholics to equal the spiritual dedication of Libyans, Balbo ordered all fascist officials to attend official Catholic masses in a 1938 circular. The formerly anti-clerical governor, who grew to see the value of the Church as a force of order in the late 1930s,[669] argued that "in this land, where the Muslim population places spiritual faith at the highest level of human values, we must demonstrate our respect, attachment, and pride for the Roman Catholic Church." Furthermore, since Balbo opposed the Italian turn to racial theory, he urged that religious difference constitute the justification for Italian superiority in Libya.[670] Thus, Balbo hoped that respect for Islam would not only serve political goals vis-à-vis the Libyan population, but also as a fillip to greater Catholic religiosity. Only by being strong Catholics would Italy maintain its right to rule over a similarly spiritual people.

Others chaffed at the prospect of state policies directed towards reconciliation. In a letter sent to Mussolini, the Italian Catholic missionary Roberto Focà, a member of the Algerian branch of the White Fathers, warned of the dangers of encouraging Islam. Citing the unchanging nature of an Islamic faith that could not support foreign or secular rule and forced backwards practices on believers, the missionary believed that Islam was incompatible with Italian expansionism. The Italian rhetoric of "respect" for a

668 *Libia*, Pio Gardenghi, "Il Richiamo del Muezzin alla preghiera del tramonto", November 1939.
669 Segrè, *Italo Balbo*, pp. 444-445.
670 ACS, MAI 22/1, B. 1950, F. 9, Balbo Circular, "Messa Ufficiale", 12 July 1938.

"modernizing" Islam would play into the hands of anti-Western and eternally backwards Muslims. The best path forward was to establish freedom of religion in Italian colonies with no direct support for Islam. Given a freedom of choice, Focà predicted that Italian Muslims would renounce their religion and adopt Western practices and beliefs.[671]

Though authorities turned a blind eye to Focà's warnings, his argument did share an element with those who sought reconciliation: the link between Italian political interests and Islam. The common framework for Islamic supporters and critics was that any interpretation of the role of Islam would be tied to Italian expansionism. Even if figures like Guidi and Castelli had the momentary upper-hand, critics of Islam like Focà, along with those convinced that the East-West divide would always breed conflict, had an anti-Islamist position ready-at-hand for the fascist regime. And those pushing for a truly pro-Islamic turn often admitted that they were fighting an uphill battle in public opinion thanks to a long history of suspicion, hatred, and ignorance towards Islam. As Cerbella put it, "Let us say that the Muslims know who we are, whereas we still know little about them".[672] But as long as the regime felt that supporting Islam was compatible with its imperial control, the official policy of "respect" would be maintained.

III. Consuming Libyan Traditions

Italian policy towards Islam coincided with a broader desire to reify the cultural and economic life of Libyans. Analyzing this strategy raises questions about the

671 ASMAE, MAI Affari Politici, B. 73, F. Missionari d'Africa "Padri Bianchi", P. Roberto Focà to Mussolini, 21 July 1938.

672 *L'Italia d'Oltremare*, Gino Cerbella, "La cultura Islamica in Italia e l'insegnamento della storia", 5 February 1939.

relationship of colonialism, modernity, and tradition. The Italians believed that their brand of colonialism would introduce modernity to their subjects while maintaining traditional social structures and ways of living. The scholar of Nigerian history, Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò has called such a form of colonialism sociocryonics. In the case of figures like the influential British colonial governor Frederick Lugard, promoting indirect rule was not just a cost-cutting move, but also protected Africans from modernity.[673] This view was informed by strongly held racist views which even held sway in the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Committee of which Lugard was a key member. The application of sociocryonics to Mandate colonies was common, despite being in direct conflict with the goal of preparing the Mandates for eventual independence.[674] For Táíwò, the use of sociocryonics marked a gap between colonialism and modernity, since it prevented Africans from enjoying the freedom to choose their own path of development and progress. While colonialism could offer signs of modernity such as roads and hospitals, it could not truly bring it about unless it allowed the colonized to become free individuals with the same guaranteed rights enjoyed by Europeans.[675] The harsh Italian treatment of Libyans would certainly substantiate the claim that colonialism and modernity were distinct. And a clear goal of the Italians alleged protection of Islam was to prevent Libyans from joining the urban middle-classes and making political demands. However, by examining the Italian

673 Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa* (Bloomington, 2010), pp. 10-15, 128-154.
674 For Lugard and his influence on the League of Nations' Permanent Mandates Commission, see Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 107-111, 134-140.
675 Táíwò, *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity*, pp. 1-17.

views of why the maintenance of Libya's traditions was necessary, we can see that even if sociocryonics suppressed certain elements of modernity, its imposition was a response to explicitly-stated needs of a modern Italy.

As we have seen, the Italian protection of Libyan traditions included an Islamic element which was inspired by the need to impress Muslims around the world and respond to criticisms of Italian rule launched by exiled Libyans and pan-Arab and pan-Islamic figures. Similarly, the rejection of legal assimilation and the maintenance of traditional legal courts and statuses was informed not just by the growing push for racial policies within Italy, but also the knowledge that French efforts at assimilation had provoked a political backlash from nationalists and Islamic reformers across North Africa. Even accounting for these external considerations, the Italians themselves sought to define themselves against the Libyan "Other" through the discovery and safe-keeping of what was "authentically" Libyan. Many Italians grieved at the potential loss of Libyan traditions at the hands of Europe's "decadent" modern civilization. A member of Balbo's entourage, the writer Nello Quilici, was emblematic of this view, declaring that Europeans were condemned to follow a cultural ideal of pursuing "impossible perfection…which only increases our insatiability and adds to our torment." The Orient however, taught that happiness could be found in limiting desire through recognition of the vanity of struggle.[676] The "lesson" of the East was incommensurable for Quilici; a mere recognition that an alternate way of life existed, out of the reach of Europeans. As long as Libyans were

676 *Il Mediterraneo*, Nello Quilici, "Nell interno della Libia: Istantanee da Tripoli a Gadames", February 1938.

sheltered from those elements of modernity deemed harmful, Italians believed that the colony would serve as a safe-haven for spiritual values and authentic customs.

Though Europeans had long seen the Orient as a site where the "authentic" and "sublime" could still be found, the Italian focus on protecting Libyan traditions was shaped by the power of the state to intervene. An "authentic" Libya would then require, to borrow Hobsbawm's famous expression, the invention of traditions, or at times, their appropriation.[677] Such practices would not be exclusive to Libya; Italian folklorists were hard at work resurrecting local traditions while cities spruced up their historical buildings to better conform to tourist expectations.[678] Following Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi's argument, we can see how in Libya, as in Italy, the regime hoped to create forms of cultural consumption consistent with fascist goals.[679] In Libya, the primary cause of state intervention in creating and promoting an "authentic" Libya for purposes of consumption was unsurprisingly the development of a Libyan tourism industry. As early as 1932, shortly after the cessation of hostilities in Cyrenaica, Fulvio Suvich outlined a strategy to promote tourism that would focus on the fact that Libya was the only North African colony that had not been "excessively Europeanized". And to maintain that claim, Suvich argued that all the "local color" of urban centers in the province would have to remain intact, even with

677 Eric Hobsbawm "Introduction: Inventing Tradition", in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 1-14.

678 For efforts at revamping buildings, see Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, "Inventing the Palazzo del Corte in Ferrara" and D. Medina Lasansky, "Towers and Tourists: The Cinematic City of San Gimignano", in Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (eds.), *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (Ithaca, 2005), pp. 97-131.

679 Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 119-147.

the addition of sanitation infrastructure. Furthermore, Suvich urged that colonial advertisements focus on images of the exotic instead of long-winded written descriptions.[680] Within months, there were already calls to bring tourists to Muslim pilgrimage sites during large festivals.[681] And when such festivals did not exist, they were invented: when one hundred Italian schoolteachers visited the oasis of Tajura in late 1932, a local colonial official organized one thousand Libyans for a night of whirling dervish exhibitions, camels, and dance competitions.[682] In this case, teachers supposedly sent to learn about the realities of colonial life would more likely act as travel agents back home.

Since the Italian displacement of so many Libyans into the interior had done much to shatter traditional ways of life that could appeal to tourists, the easiest way to maintain the necessary Oriental aesthetics was through the conservation of Libyan architecture and artisan trades. The 1934 plan for Tripoli met Suvich's demands by forbidding the construction of European building in the old city, while calling for its residents to rebuild dilapidated structures in a traditional manner.[683] When Arab aesthetics were not present in sufficient quantities, they were sometimes added by Italian administrators. In Benghazi, where there were few Arabic arches, the municipality decided to add them throughout the city. As one commentator noted, the danger of turning the arch into a dull leitmotif caused the local architect to "vary its characteristics while remaining faithful to the spirit of the

680 *Tripolitania, Rassegna mensile illustrata*, Gino Massano, "Antico e nuovo turismo in Tripolitania", May 1932.
681 *Tripolitania*, "Festa annual di Sidi el-Gabu", July 1932.
682 *Tripolitania*, "Gli insegnanti fascisti in Tripolitania", September 1932.
683 Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, pp. 158-159.

Arab style."[684] At the same time, a plethora of buildings meant for Italian-use, like the Uaddan Hotel and Casino, borrowed heavily from local Libyan designs.[685] Despite such efforts at preserving a local feel, by 1937 one commentator noted that Tripoli had become too European for those looking for new experiences. Only a development of the nascent tourism infrastructure to southern oasis towns like Nalut and Ghadames could offer authentic experiences for the "nervous and rushed humanity of the century of machines."[686] But even in these towns, the "authentic" was maintained through state-actors. In Ghadames, those local Libyans who had been granted land-concessions also received houses that mimicked the traditional domiciles of the oasis.[687]

The other state-supported signifier of the "authentic" was the artisan industry. Trade schools in Tripoli and Benghazi ensured that Libyan artisans would continue to produce traditional goods, while the establishment of the Fascist Institution for Libyan Artisans in 1936 sought to nurture the industry through subsidies and participation of artisans in fairs and exhibitions.[688] Meanwhile, Balbo oversaw the construction of an artisan's quarter in Tripoli, with schools for gold and silversmiths, as well as potters and weavers.[689] Colonial publications ran long series of articles in an attempt to delineate the

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684 *Cirenaica Illustrata*, G.B. Costa, "Bengasi Maggiorenne", June 1935.

685 For the influence of Libyan forms on Italian architecture, see Brian L. McLaren, *Architecture and Tourism in Italian Colonial Libya*, pp. 183-217.

686 *L'Azione Coloniale*, Mario Dorato, "Panorama del Turismo Coloniale: Verso il deserto", 26 August 1937.

687 *Libia*, Francesco Coro, "Una realtà che sembra sogno: Il miracolo della colonizzazione nell'oasi di Gadames", October 1940.

688 *Africa Italiana*, Gennaro E. Pistolese, "Ascesa dell'artigianato libico", March-April 1939.

689 *L'Italia d'Oltremare*, Guglielmo Narducci, "Nell'Africa Mediterranea Italiana l'Artigianato è oggi un cospicuo element nella economia della Libia e nel suo progresso", 5 December 1936. The

various local Libyan products in order to gain public attention.[690] Support for Libyan artisans accomplished two goals. Firstly, it would ensure that a portion of urban Libyans would have steady work rather than constituting a mobile and potentially dangerous labor force. Secondly, the artisan workshops, stores, and products served as a key component to the tourism industry.

The needs of tourism proved a powerful impulse to the attempted reification of Libyan traditions. After visiting Tripoli for a month to work on a novel, the writer Mura shared her thoughts on the local artisan industry for the Milanese paper, *Sera*. Mura was no fascist shill, as she was placed under surveillance for her stories of interracial love. Yet her desire to protect a "traditional" Libya not only corresponded to that of fascist officials, but went even further. For Mura, traditional artisanship had to be protected from machines and the universalizing effects of "corrupting" mass-market consumer culture. Calling an Arab dressed as a European "out of place" [stonatura], but "always an Arab and always unique", Mura believed that the protection of the industry would first and foremost protect a way of life. While Italians threatened "authentic" Libya with their modernity, they were also uniquely qualified to act as protectors for traditions that "Arab negligence had almost allowed to die". Without the maintenance of such traditions, tourists in search of "folklore"

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buildings for the new quarter were designed by Florestano di Fausto, known for synthesizing modern and traditional styles, and Balbo's favorite architect.

690 See *Tripolitania*, Mario Scaparro, "Arte d Artigiani nella Tripoli Barbaresca", February-June 1932; *Cirenaica Illustrata*, Guglielmo Narducci, "L'artigianato in Cirenaica", March, May, June 1933.

would only find the same mass-produced goods sold as trinkets all over the globe.[691] Those who held similar views could feel some relief in the knowledge that the fascist regime also sought to prevent the industrialization and proletarianization of Libyans. If the state-sponsored emigration of thirty thousand Italians to Libya in 1938-1939 was meant to keep rural Italians out of cities, then it is no surprise that the regime hoped to fix Libyans into traditional occupations.

The Italian attempt to fix Libyans into a traditional and largely rural economy had qualifications. Their policy was not to return rural Libyans to a "natural" state, but rather to offer a modernized and controlled pastoral economy. Measures to this end can be seen in Balbo's much publicized rescue of large flocks from drought-stricken pastoral areas,[692] the construction of over four hundred traditional tukuls outside of Tajura to settle Bedouin,[693] and mobile medical units to provide basic health services in the countryside. Such state-actions were meant to promote a return to the countryside for those who had left for the coast and prevent the creation of an uprooted Libyan proletariat.[694] These fears also contributed to the measures taken in the late 1930s to facilitate the Libyan acquisition of small farms. Arab schools, like that of Misurata, hoped to provide the sons of small

691 *Libia*, "Nobiltà e Poesia dell'artigianato Libico", March 1940. Mura's article is quoted extensively within.

692 Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, pp. 243-244.

693 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/33, F. Notiziario settimanale politico-amministrativo, Ministero delle Colonie, Notiziario N. 21, 8 February 1936.

694 Views expressed by the archaeologist Biagio Pace and the colonial expert Gennaro Mondaini in *Africa Italiana*, Biagio Pace, "Civiltà Italiana nel Sahara", January 1939; *L'Italia d'Oltremare*, Gennaro Mondaini, "Impressione Libiche di un colonialista", 5 March 1938.

landowners with an education that combined modern and traditional methods.[695] Despite limited resources, the administration was clearly interested in slowing down the creation of a mobile labor pool. Yet public works projects and Italian industry required cheap manual labor. In an effort to prevent the demand for Libyan labor from encouraging too many to leave rural occupations, Balbo established a maximum wage for Libyans and offered incentives for Italian business owners to attract Italian workers to Libya.[696] Thus the state hoped to use modest tools of modernization to balance the displacement of Libyans from the most fertile lands with the prevention of internal immigration to coastal cities. This mixture of modernity and tradition could be seen in other fields. For instance, Radio-Tripoli bragged that its Arab transmissions were popular for playing modern music that remained tied to Arab roots, rather than borrowing from the "too-modern" styles that mixed in elements of American jazz.[697] Similarly, Italians claimed that broadcasting prayers over loudspeakers was a means of modernizing Islam.[698] For Italian colonial authorities and experts, the success of the Italian imperial project in Libya depended on the reification of Libyans into protected, but permanently second-class citizens who would serve as tourist artifacts as well as allies in future conflicts with the allegedly anti-Islamic liberal and communist geo-political spheres.

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695 ASMAE, MAI Vol. II, P. 150/33, F. Notiziario settimanale politico-amminsitrativo, Ministero delle Colonie, Notiziario N. 19, 24 January 1936.

696 ACS, MAI 22/1, B. 1950, F. 9, Balbo Circular to Libyan Prefects, 6 May 1938. However, the fact that Balbo warned that salaries for Libyans were "well above" the mandated maximum limit indicates opposing interests between Italian employers and state planning.

697 *Etiopia (Latina)*, "Radio-Tripoli", February 1939.

698 ACS, 18/1 Minculpop Gabinetto, B. 15, F. Libia, Translation of *al-Haqiqa*, 22 September 1939.

CONCLUSION

When it came to governing Libya's Muslims, Italians had to consider domestic and foreign factors. Fascists never wavered in their final goal of maintaining Italian supremacy in Libya through demographic colonization; aside from an administrative elite loyal to Italy, Libyans would largely be relegated to agricultural labor. Yet foreign policy interests dictated that Libya appear to be a model of pro-Islamic governance. As such, the Italians framed the secondary-status of Libyans as a means of protecting Islam. If Libyans could not access upper-administrative and political positions, it was because their elites were destined for religious posts. The protection of artisan labor would salvage local culture and prevent urban Libyans from forming a proletarian mass. Italians cynically touted second-class citizenship as a pledge to protect Islamic law and traditions. In order to communicate this message to potential Arab allies, Libyans themselves were expected to express their appreciation for Italy and fascism whenever abroad. At the same time, the protection of Islam and an "authentic" Libya from European modernity was in reality a result of European modernity itself, whether it be the reform of Islamic practices according to European notions of decency, or the staged recreation of the traditional in the name of a tourist industry. Finally, some colonial figures like Balbo were not content with the subjugation of Libyans; they would also need to become good fascists. To that end, early steps were taken to integrate Libyans into the fascist body-politic, albeit as a separate appendage. What is most striking in this regard is that while fascists trusted their inquadramento strategies for Italians, they were concerned that affiliating Libyans too closely with fascism would risk the loss of Italian racial prestige. As a result, steps that would include Libyans in the institutions of the regime were half-hearted or rejected. Taken together, these tools of legitimation and governance provide one model for how fascists hoped to depoliticize religious and nationalist opposition and inculcate support for, or at

the least, inspire obedience to Italian rule. Yet the continued reports of Italian abuses by Libyan exiles, the lack of enthusiasm for fascist initiatives within Libya, and the tense relations during World War II exposed the numerous failures of fascism to win over its Libyan subjects.

Chapter Five: Governing Muslims II: The Failure of Reform Projects in Vichy-Era French Algeria

INTRODUCTION

When France signed an armistice agreement with Germany on 18 June 1940, French authority in Algeria rested on shaky ground. Though the heated political culture of the 1930s had been temporarily tamped down by the administration's suppression of the nationalist Parti Populaire Algérien (PPA) and the Algerian Communist Party (PCA) in the months leading up to the war, there could be no doubt that the political contestations of the Popular Front years would return. Vichy administrators therefore faced a difficult task. The maintenance of empire was a core component of the Vichy vision for France. Not only could the empire serve as a means to recuperate the French loss of influence in Europe, but it also offered a field for the application of more authoritarian and conservative values. Imperial reforms promised to strengthen both individual colonies and the rightist project of national regeneration. Yet the wartime economy greatly restricted the resources available for large-scale development plans favored by technocrats. And significant political reforms were hard to envision given the French concern for their prestige in the wake of defeat and the conservatism of Vichy administrators. Despite these limitations, Vichy governors and administrators hoped to employ the new tools of the National Revolution to forestall a political crisis in Algeria and offer an alternative to the failed program of the Popular Front.

Despite the short duration of Vichy rule in Algeria, the period is seen as critical to the ensuing struggle for independence in Algeria, insofar as the authoritarian and illiberal

turn forced Algerian nationalist movements to work underground. And when those moderates who had failed to extract meaningful reforms from the Popular Front faced similar barriers when dealing with the far-right, there seemed to be no other alternative than eventual independence. In narratives that track the development of Algerian nationalism leading to the war for independence, such as those of Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer[699] and Mahfoud Kaddache, the racist and repressive policies of Vichy are consequently highlighted. In the case of Kaddache, the period is even treated as something of a speed-bump, as Algerian nationalists merely had to wait the war out.[700] Jacques Cantier, on the other hand, provided a thorough examination of the period in *L'Algérie sous le régime de Vichy*, a book that admirably covers the social, political, and economic events of Vichy Algeria. With Cantier's detailed account, we can see the complexity of the period, full of contradictory policy ideas, conflicting personalities and social formations, and competing interest groups.[701] This chapter aims to build on Cantier's work, by focusing solely on Vichy policies towards Algerians, and the experiences and reactions to those policies. In particular, it relies on documents not utilized by Cantier; these largely consist of Algerian and French Algerian opinions overheard or intercepted by French agents. Since French administrators understood that censorship limited the role of public opinion as a provider of feedback, it was essential to discreetly figure out what people actually thought

699 Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Aux origines.*

700 Mahfoud Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme Algérien: Question nationale et politique algérienne, 1919-1951, Vol. II* (Alger, 1980).

701 Jacques Cantier, *L'Algérie sous le régime de Vichy* (Paris, 2002).

of government actions. A careful use of these documents can now provide us with an insight into how different actors responded to and interpreted Vichy policies.

Algeria was only a part of a broader French empire that the Vichy regime sought to revitalize. Studies by Ruth Ginio and Eric T. Jennings have explored the Vichy experience in French West Africa, Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina. For Ginio, Vichy did not so much represent a new form of colonial governance, but rather an intensification and unmasking of what had existed before 1940.[702] This argument certainly holds weight in the Algerian case as well, but can minimize the belief of actors that the moment of authoritarian government provided opportunities to carry out policies that previously were either pursued with great hesitation, or not at all. Without denying the many continuities with republican colonialism, the authoritarian and rightist Vichy administration did bring about new discourses, schemes, and expectations. The most compelling argument made by Jennings is that the Vichy focus on folklore and traditionalism unwittingly helped shift colonial opposition groups from working within the universalist republican ideal to a more exclusionary and anti-French nationalism.[703] Yet while the regime did speak about Algerian traditions, it was always careful to avoid mobilizing the nationalism of religious and political groups. Since these movements had already gained traction in the mid-to-late 1930s, Vichy's positive role in intensifying Algerian nationalism must be viewed skeptically.

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702 Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy Years in French West Africa* (Lincoln, 2006).

703 Eric. T. Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-1944* (Stanford, 2006).

The central argument in this chapter is that Vichy policies towards Algerians were strongly colored by ideological concerns. In the effort to gain the adherence of Algerians willing to work with France, rightist authorities had to sell the authoritarian values of the National Revolution as a promising alternative to the liberal-socialist values of the Popular Front. As a result, similarities arose between Vichy policies and those of the Italians in Libya. Islam would allegedly be more compatible with the right than with the universalist left. Institutions geared towards youth would provide a public role for ambitious Algerians without risking open political opposition. Social policies to protect a traditional and agricultural way of life would keep Algerians from entering the sites of dangerous and anarchic modernity-the coastal cities. The clearly formulated ideological vision became quite complex and messy in reality, as the exact nature of any given reform was open to debate. More importantly, the reactions of Algerians with different goals in mind, as well as French Algerians hesitant to change the slightest foundation of the status-quo, altered the trajectory of reform efforts.

Vichy policy towards Algerians was most clearly outlined in a long report sent from Governor-General Jean-Marie Charles Abrial to Admiral François Darlan, the head of the Vichy government, in June 1941. Though the context of the document must be kept in mind- Abrial would soon be replaced by General Maxime Weygand and was likely looking to highlight his political initiatives- it still reveals the fundamental Vichy strategy towards Algerians with clarity. And while the two successive Governor-Generals would alter Abrial's program in small ways, it largely remained intact until the Allied occupation in November 1942.

For Abrial, the starting point of "Muslim politics" was the impossibility of enacting "structural reforms" given the social and economic instability caused by the war. In the meantime, the highest priority was to "maintain: maintain the security, trust, and confidence of the population groups", followed by defending against harmful propaganda. The primary tool of maintaining order would be the "absorption or neutralization" of any social or intellectual movements that threatened to constitute a strong opposition. Abrial elaborated upon his techniques to appeal to each Algerian group that could assert its interests: moderate reformists, reformist and traditional Muslims, loyal notables, and the urban and rural Algerian bourgeoisie. A plethora of tactics followed to back up Abrial's claim that absorption was the best strategy to follow for all these groups, as opposed to the neutralization of Communists and Algerian nationalists. [704]

This chapter will explore some of the tactics employed by Abrial and his successors, and why most proved to be ineffective. Not only did the policy of "maintenance" instead of structural reforms disappoint the many Algerian political figures desperate for meaningful change after the struggles of the Popular Front, but appealing to so many different groups also proved difficult. The Islamic reformists, the ʿUlema, as well as the nationalist Parti Populaire Algérien tended to support policies that preserved a cultural divide between the French and Algerian communities, and had little interest in working with French authorities. Other Algerian reformers, like the former ʿUlema leader Ṭayeb al-ʿUqbi, Muhammad Salah Bendjelloul, and those in the urban middle-classes, led

704 ANOM, GGA, 12H/13, Abrial to Darlan, "Politique musulmane", June 1941.

by Ferhat Abbas, hoped that legal equality could be attained through petitions to the new Vichy government. As Abrial recognized, the desire for equality was "more than a tendency, but a myth in the Sorelian sense of the word". The reference to the renegade Marxist philosopher Georges Sorel, known for his influence on fascist ideology, was apt. Sorel predicted that a mythic image of a general-strike would mobilize working-classes and make clear their absolute opposition to employers.[705] In the colonial context, Abrial feared a similar binary political crisis pitting the French against Algerians rallying around different interpretations of "equality". The Algerian governors had to pursue their exclusionary policies while outwardly balancing respect for Algerian difference with the desire for equality.

A FAILED "POLITICS OF RESPECT"

Maxime Weygand, who had taken on the Vichy-created position of Delegate-General for North Africa, tasked with coordinating a broad economic and military policy for French North Africa,[706] gave a speech in late October 1941 reprimanding "certain indigènes [who] are no longer faithful to their polite customs which are a tradition among Muslims". According to Weygand, such behavior had political consequences: "The policy of understanding, of patience, and of respect [d'égards] that I have encouraged is not possible unless it is practiced by all. As a result, I have given orders that this stance be respected." Unsurprisingly, Algerians were displeased at being blamed for poor relations

[705] For Sorel's famous work on political myths, see *Reflections on Violence*, trans. T.E. Hulme and J. Roth (Mineola, 2004).
[706] Cantier, *L'Algérie sous le régime de Vichy*, p. 54.

with the French.[707] Yet Weygand's speech is instructive insofar as it reveals the importance placed by Vichy figures on the "politics of respect".

The idea seems to have derived from an Algerian teacher, French citizen and World War I veteran from Kabylie, Rabah Zenati (1877-1952).[708] Best known as the director for *La Voix indigène* (1929-1947), a key paper advocating a pro-French position with a print-run of two thousand copies, Zenati was briefly involved in reformist politics in the mid-1930s before quickly abandoning any hope of political action without the support of the French administration.[709] As an Algerian who advocated for reforms without questioning French sovereignty, he was a particularly well-suited mediator for Vichy. When speaking with a French agent in Constantine, Zenati explained that authoritarian governance provided a propitious occasion for reform, though he believed the French would have to act quickly, since they would only have so much time before the colons re-asserted their authority.[710] Since Zenati hoped for the regime's success, French administrators read his articles carefully and hoped to follow his advice when possible.

Zenati's rightist leanings must have helped as well, since he often spoke the language of Vichy supporters. Though he called for assimilation, Zenati hardly had political equality in mind, stating that "We have too often spoken of rights, which has given birth to more than dangerous tendencies. Fortunately, we Muslims hold the principle of the

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707 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, Préfecture d'Alger, C.I.E., "L'activité indigène dans le department d'Alger", November 1941.

708 Jean Déjeux, *Dictionnaire des auteurs maghrébins de langue française* (Paris, 1984), p. 212.

709 Cantier, *L'Algérie sous le régime de Vichy*, pp. 260-261.

710 ANOM, Algérie, Department de Constantine, B/3/608, F. Mesures favorable aux indigènes, C.I.E., "A/S des réformes en faveur des indigènes", 25 April 1941.

absolute necessity of a strong authority that maintains our old traditions through order and discipline. Therein lies the secret of the moral success of France."[711] In fact, at other times, Zenati fell in with far-right discourse by questioning the purity of a potentially decadent France. While musing on the nature of civilization, the Kabyle teacher bemoaned the "many Frenchmen…[who] have lost the sense of their own civilization and confuse it with vague ideologies collected in the bazaar of a spiritual internationalism. It is evident that one cannot apply such confused conceptions to indigènes, that one cannot make them benefit from an historical experience whose meaning has been lost and which one can no longer interpret."[712]

Starting in the fall of 1940, Zenati's articles focused almost exclusively on the importance of better relations between the French and Algerians. The new Prefect of Algiers, Pierre Pagès, an authoritarian and paternalist colonial hand from Indochina, commented extensively on these articles as he tracked the lack of desired progress while recommending that more be done by the French to moderate their own behavior. At first, Zenati proposed the idea as a means of averting a social crisis, arguing that "the smallest bit of injustice profoundly affects the indigène…But he is ready to follow into Gehenna those who give him the impression of respecting his dignity."[713] But as the months passed, the tone became more urgent. In a February 1941 article that was entirely censured, Zenati warned that Algerians were "beginning to become disenchanted, claiming that with some

711 ANOM, FM, 1AFFPOL/904/1, "Bulletin mensuel de presse indigène d'Algérie", June 1941.
712 Ibid., "Bulletin mensuel de presse indigène d'Algérie", March 1941.
713 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, Préfecture d'Alger, C.I.E., "L'activité indigène dans le department d'Alger", September 1940.

lower functionaries, the re-establishment of authority means more strictness, more impolite behavior, more harassment, all of which leads to a tightening of the screw of the old practices."[714] Two months later, Zenati continued his criticism of the failure of the "politics of respect", fearing that the National Revolution would be wasted by the many French Algerians who "continue to display to indigènes that air of haughty superiority and of contempt which always arouses troublesome reflections among Muslims." Pagès agreed with the author, and feared that such behavior would spoil the "mystique of the New France" among Algerians. For the Prefect, the answer was to be found in the teachings of the highly respected colonial figure Hubert Lyautey. Since the Catholic and monarchic Lyautey rejected unmediated French modernity in the colonies in favor of a controlled modernization that relied heavily on the collaboration of local elites and French respect for customs and traditions, he was a perfect example for many like-minded Vichy adimintrators. Pagès included several quotes from the former Governor General of Morocco in his report as examples of the proper attitude to be carried out by the French administration, including an excerpt from Lyautey's May 1921 speech in Rabat in which he explained that "the secret is the outstretched hand, and not the condescending hand; the loyal handshake between men that leads to understanding. This race is not inferior, it is different. Let us understand their differences as they understand our own. Let us adapt to each other".[715] By framing the "politics of respect" as a continuation of Lyautey's legacy,

714 ANOM, Algérie, 912/135, Préfecture d'Alger, C.I.E., "L'activité indigène dans le department d'Alger", February 1941.
715 Ibid., April 1941.

which Zenati did as well, Pagès hoped that the idea would no longer be seen by French Algerians as mere weakness in front of the Algerians.

Yet as time went by, Pagès' reports on the lack of progress in respectful relations started to read as anecdotal catalogues of how firmly entrenched the French-Algerian contempt for Algerians remained. While the Prefect frowned at the many instances of insults and misunderstandings between civilians, the behavior of government functionaries was far more disturbing. A long complaint from May 1941 is particularly revealing of how difficult it was for Vichy authorities to impose respectful behavior on lower officials accustomed to treating Algerians harshly:

> Some low-level authorities are still, here and there, pointed out as engaging in acts of brutality against the indigènes. In Algiers, on May 25, a European police agent engaged in unjustifiable mistreatment of an ambulant merchant. In Lavigerie, April 28, during a distribution of grain, a hundred indigènes threw stones at the Wheat Office building, with one European being lightly wounded. We must not see here, it seems, a demonstration of discontent against the Administration, but a revolt of indigènes against a brutal man, for whom the baton was the only argument. The rural policeman of Boghni (a naturalized Italian), who, having surprised, on 2 August 1940, a young indigène bathing in the municipal wash house, brutalized him to such a point that he died of a ruptured spleen, was just acquitted by the Oran Appeals Court. The affair already had at the time caused a justified reaction in the Dra-el-Mizan region. One now fears that the recently rendered verdict may now bring up "racial justice" again. The judicial act, through racism or through a lack of contact with public authorities, has betrayed the government's way of thinking.[716]

On the eve of the Allied invasion of North Africa, the situation remained the same, with a French Municipal Councilor from Maison-Carré defending several legionaries who urinated on the interior wall of a Muslim cemetery as a ceremony ended, and another functionary reporting that "The Muslims are increasingly distancing themselves from us.

716 Ibid., May 1941.

To tell the truth, we don't do enough to approach them. Many colons show little understanding. The Municipal Administration, responsible for important contacts, lacks tact."[717] Despite the fact that some in the Algerian administration understood that daily interactions were poisoning the Vichy discourse of national unity, their efforts yielded little.

The extent of the failure of local authorities to adhere to a "politics of respect" was highlighted by the "Zéralda Affair" in August 1942. The mayor of Zéralda, though possessing more contacts with republicans than rightists, placed a sign on the town's beach banning Arabs and Jews after French residents complained about local Algerians collecting wood in the area. The sign-post, placed next to another sign banning dogs and horses, became a symbol of French contempt in the eyes of Algerians. In order to enforce the ban, the mayor led a round-up of those who had allegedly frequented the beach. Forty Algerians were then placed in a small basement room, where twenty-five died overnight from asphyxiation. As protests followed, the Director of Muslim Affairs, Augustin Berque feared that the case could turn into a Sorelian myth uniting Algerians against a simplified figure of the French colon as an enemy.[718] In the end, those administrators who hoped that a mere change in attitude would save colonial relations were disillusioned. Yet the failure of Vichy to redress the economic, political, religious, and social inequality between French and Algerians practically guaranteed that verbal abuses would continue, especially in a

717 Ibid., October 1942.

718 Cantier, *L'Algérie sous le régime de Vichy*, pp. 187-190.

war-time situation in which a lack of resources heightened tensions and inspired racial solidary among French settlers.

REACTIONS TO THE STRATEGY OF RESPECT AND CONTACT

The naïveté of the politics of respect is demonstrated by the reactions of French settlers. Many felt that the administration was endangering the colonial status-quo; far from treating Algerians as equals, many settlers hoped that French authority could be asserted even more forcefully. Some French colons believed that the administration's efforts to offer palliatives and respect to Algerians only discouraged their work ethic. As a result, even the hesitant and small-scale efforts made by Vichy authorities raised immediate concerns among French Algerians. One visitor to the countryside told a friend in France that it was "impossible to force them [the Algerians] to work; they know they are supported. The brigadier of the village gendarmerie is even going to be replaced for having lifted his hand against one of them."[719] The colon Jean Gandelin complained that Algerians sold their rations at high prices on the black market and therefore felt no need to work. Unless the administration re-established order, he feared he would not have enough labor for harvesting.[720] Another could barely contain his anger, exclaiming how "Now, everything is for the indigènes, fabric and yarn, all out of fear that they may revolt, which is shameful, since the majority of them resell it all on the black market. If the higher-ups knew these people, they would not give them so many rights; they would not put them on the level of

719 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Oran, 5I/87, F. Etat d'esprit 1942, N. 4.927, "Conséquences de la politique arabophilie", 14 October 1941.

720 Ibid., N. 1.508, "Attitude des indigènes et situation de l'agriculture", 24 April 1942.

Europeans…If they lived like us among this race, they would quickly understand that these people, at bottom, are still savages."[721] Similarly contemptuous views were presented in a speech by the president of Oran's Chamber of Agriculture, Catroux, during the Interior Minister Pierre Pucheu's visit to Algeria. Catroux reportedly gave "an outrageous panegyric of the Algerian colon" before attacking Algerians, "whose laziness and indolence he stigmatized in violent terms." Both the French administration and Pucheu were upset at Catroux for alienating Algerians.[722]

Indeed, those in the Direction of Muslim Affairs acknowledged the problem of labor shortages but tried to find different causes. One report from Algiers noted that in some areas of the department, up to half of manual laborers refused to work despite higher wages. Even attempts to withdraw ration cards failed. Though no evidence could be found, two possible catalysts for the unrest were identified: returning POWs spreading German propaganda, and Jews telling Algerians that the French took anti-Semitic measures in order to cut off Algerians from local credit.[723] Whatever the causes, by October 1942, the DMA suggested that "adequate administration measures" would have to be taken to encourage Algerians to work.[724]

For Algerians, it was not a matter of laziness or foreign influence, but of survival. Despite small administrative measures to raise wages, the cost of living greatly exceeded

721 Ibid., N. 1.770, "Commentaires sur la politique pro-arabe", 24 May 1942.
722 Ibid., N. 113, "A/S du voyage de Mr. Pucheu, Ministre de l'Intérieur en Oranie", 28 February 1942.
723 Ibid., N. 994, "Sur l'attitude des ouvriers agricoles indigènes vis-à-vis des colons", 13 April 1942.
724 Ibid., N. 2512, "Note sur l'état d'esprit des indigènes d'Algérie", 3 October 1942.

purchasing power.[725] A letter from Abdelkader Kroub to a family member in France expressed the desperation of the situation: "The workers here get paid 50 francs a day, but one doesn't find many since death has taken so many. When you leave "the land of infidels" to come back to "the land of Islam", you will see for yourself how you have no worries, whereas we have hundreds: death, lack of clothes, etc. I am very worried about the family. I ask you to come quickly if you don't want to find the house empty."[726]

Other French Algerians believed that Vichy policies favored Algerians at their expense. A common theme was that Algerians used their rations and higher wages to buy up supplies. As one frustrated French Algerian remarked during a phone call, "this situation will finish badly if the Government continues to concern itself more with them than with the French. The Arabs profit too much from it."[727] Other instances raised French Algerian resentment at both Algerians and the administration. One mother agreed with her imprisoned syndicalist son that he would be freed if he were Algerian, adding that "the indigènes are listened to closely now, and you know that they won't forget to let you know that they are more French than the French."[728] A resident of Oran feared that Algerians passing Europeans in ration lines indicated that they "want to become the masters again".[729] Even an Algerian from Kabylie who appreciated the efforts of Governor-General Châtel remarked upon French resentment:

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725 Cantier, *L'Algérie sous le régime de Vichy*, pp. 178-179.

726 ANOM, Algérie, Department d'Oran, 5I/87, F. Etat d'esprit 1942, N. 1.771, "Raison du manqué d'ouvriers agricoles à Mazouna" 26 May 1942.

727 Ibid., "Contrôle Téléphonique (Semaine du 2/10 au 9/10/41).

728 Ibid., N. 336, "Critique sur la considération accordée aux indigènes", 23 November 1941.

729 Ibid., N. 5587, "Agressions nocturnes." 7 November 1941.

> There are a number of Europeans who are spreading the idea that Algeria has never been so poorly governed…The Governor goes everywhere and constantly moves to see for himself; that doesn't stop many French from declaring that they detest him, as well as the Prefect and the Mayor. Is it because these leaders are interested in our fate and our needs! The simple desire of our leaders to do us well allows others to believe that everything is going poorly. Harmony between French and Muslims will therefore be impossible.[730]

When the administration was not blamed for encouraging Algerians, it was deemed negligent. A visitor to Tlemcen found the city "abominable for Europeans" since Algerians had allegedly become rich from black markets, and thus freed themselves from French control. He then warned that "It is of the highest necessity that they know in Vichy-and elsewhere-what danger lies ahead of us if we don't immediately and vigorously act."[731]

It was even possible for those who questioned the French colonial hierarchy to credit Vichy for the alleged newfound assertiveness of Algerians. For a certain Madame Bidet, one episode in particular, later related to prefect Pagès, confirmed a change in social relations. She recounted how an Algerian who accidently bumped the head of a woman on a bus was called a "savage" by a nearby rider before several others defended him and "rightly" treated the angered French Algerian as "a Spaniard." As this man continued to insult Algerians during the bus ride, several young boys "heroically defended their race" by responding to his charges. Mme. Bidet thought the most forceful of these boys to be "in effect the image of the National Revolution; one senses that we are giving a new direction

730 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Oran, 5I/87, F. Etat d'esprit en France, 1942-1944, N. 570, "Commentaires sur la situation en Algérie", 27 June 1942.

731 Ibid., F. Etat d'esprit 1942, N. 1.695, "Opinion et craintes sur la population arabe de Tlemcen", 17 April 1942.

to the young, but it's a little painful to admit that this was a case of a young indigène giving a lesson to forty-year old Europeans."[732]

APPROACHING ISLAM

Faced with unrest and mounting criticisms of colonial abuses, French authorities hoped to employ the values of the National Revolution to their benefit. The favored method was to compare the values of the French with those of Islam. Within weeks of the fall of the Third Republic, the Prefect of Algiers, Marc Chevalier, already envisioned the core elements of such a policy shift. Citing the need to bring together the different population groups in Algeria with a shared set of values, the Prefect recommended those of authority, responsibility, discipline, and the renouncing of electoral struggles. The potential danger of replacing liberal values with authoritarian ones would supposedly be softened by the fact that "the religious and moral tendencies of the indigène masses, which subsist everywhere despite the corruption of customs, can…provide us with a basis for understanding and collaboration." Such a strategy would entail administrative intervention to enforce Islamic practices: "Any measure to reform morals, any strict regulation of pleasures condemned by the Qurʾan (brothels, alcohol, kif, cocaine, even light entertainment, salacious publications, etc.) will have the greatest effect."[733]

Such a policy would also have a basis in the recent French colonial past, particularly in Catholic circles. The influential cardinal and Archbishop of Carthage and Algiers,

732 Ibid., N. 4.358, "Politique des égards", 16 September 1941. 800 attended the event, half of whom were Algerians.

733 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, Préfecture d'Alger, C.I.E., "L'activité indigène dans le départment d'Alger", June 1940.

Charles Lavigerie (1825-1892), though rather contemptuous of Islam, believed that Muslims could only be successfully ruled by France if the French were to lead by example and demonstrate strong Catholic values.[734] Similarly, the missionary Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916), beloved by Catholics for his work in the Algerian Sahara and eventual martyrdom, hoped that virtuous Catholics could eventually convince Muslims to convert and embrace not only a new religion, but a superior French civilization.[735] Along with Lyautey, whose fascination for Islam was famous, these figures represented a French nationalist and Catholic tradition of approaching Islam. Drawing on these figures, Vichy Catholics could make a new play to gain Algerian loyalty, this time discarding eventual conversion for a broader religious understanding between Catholic French and Muslim Algerians.

Though such a policy was never followed extensively during the Vichy period, some small steps were taken. The most successful of these was a ban on the sale of alcohol to Muslims promulgated in October 1941. Algerian complaints about French inaction regarding the regulation of alcohol, prostitution, and drugs helped inspire the measure. Newspaper articles, theatrical performances by scouts, and lobbying Algerians with connections to Vichy served as tools by concerned Algerians to pressure French authorities.[736] The new Prefect of Algiers, Pierre Pagès, was pleased with the results of the

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734 François Renault, *Le Cardinal Lavigerie: 1825-1892, L'Eglise, l'Afrique et la France* (Paris, 1992), pp. 143-146; J. Dean O'Donnell, Jr., *Lavigerie in Tunisia: The Interplay of Imperialist and Missionary* (Athens, 1979), pp. 18-21.

735 Ali Merad, *Christian Hermit in an Islamic World: A Muslim's View of Charles de Foucauld*, trans. Zoe Hersov (New York, 1999), pp. 58-69.

736 Ibid., "L'activité indigène dans le départment d'Alger", August 1941.

measure, exclaiming that it "satisfied the reformists, the marabout circles, mothers, the immense majority of those in the countryside, café owners, and even certain drinkers, who are happy to now be forbidden to engage in their own weakness." A flurry of telegrams arrived in Vichy, thanking Pétain, and the Algiers ʿUlema leader Ṭayeb al-ʿUqbi stated in a meeting of reformist organizations that "the reformist leaders see in this measure the tangible mark of the Marshal's concern for Muslims. The new regime has just created for itself an irrevocable right to their recognition". Others were less enthusiastic. Those who prided themselves on their assimilation of French culture were insulted by a law that would legally distinguish them from the French.[737] Those Algerians living in France were particularly upset, with many around Marseille complaining that "we are of course Muslims, but we want to progress and live in the twentieth century", and asking if the regime "wanted to make Frenchmen of them, or for them to remain indigènes."[738] Furthermore, the application of the law ran into difficulties. Algerians who had renounced their personal status in favor of French civil law could no longer consume alcohol, and petitioned the administration to make an exception. On the other hand, in Kabylie, the law was not applied to those who were legally French citizens, but no longer Muslim. In an attempt to clear the legal clutter and address a variety of complaints, Pagès suggested that naturalized French and those wearing European dress be excepted.[739] The prohibition

737 Ibid., "L'activité indigène dans le department d'Alger", November 1941.

738 ANOM, Algérie, Département d'Oran 5I/87, F. Etat d'esprit en France, 1942-1944, Préfecture des Bouches-du-Rhône, Service des Affaires Algériennes, N. 820, "Propos tenus par des Musulmans de Marseille", 18 November 1941.

739 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, Préfecture d'Alger, C.I.E., "L'activité indigene dans le département d'Alger", May 1942.

measure thus served as a microcosm for the fundamental problem facing Vichy authorities: any favoritism shown towards an Islamic or secular French identity for Algerians would raise protests from an important segment of society.

Other small measures were meant to demonstrate the newfound French respect for Islam. Before leaving to run the Seine-et-Oise department in September 1940, Chevalier encouraged French civil and military authorities to attend and foster the success of local Islamic festivals and pilgrimages so as to impress the rural population and "maybe discover some aspects of the indigène soul."[740] While it is unclear if local authorities followed through on Chevalier's suggestions, some efforts were made by the most influential figures. In January 1941, the Governor-General Abrial embarked on a week-long tour of Southern Algeria to gather information, which the Italian consul Arrivabene suspected was a means of engaging in Muslim propaganda, since Abrial visited mosques and even prayed at the tomb of a local Muslim saint.[741] Abrial's successor, Yves Châtel, showed similar signs of respect. When visiting a madrasa in Constantine, he told its students that "It's wrong to believe that Islam is definitively static. It's not possible to satisfy oneself with contemplating the past. The Prophet never taught that. There are two cultures here that unify and complete each other: Arab and French. Be good Arabs in order to be good Frenchmen."[742] Afterwards, the residents of Oum El Bouaghi fêted Châtel, as the village

740 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, Préfecture d'Alger, C.I.E., "L'activité indigène dans le départment d'Alger", August 1940.
741 ACS, Minculpop, DGSP, B. 88, F. Francia-Algeri, SF. Algeri 1941-42-43, "Ispezione Ammiraglio Abrial", 15 February 1941.
742 ANOM, Algérie, Départment d'Oran, 5I/87, F. Etat d'esprit 1942, Press clipping, "Le chef de la colonie à Constantine", 22 April 1942.

was “decked out” with “the lively colors of Islam gleaming aside tricolor flags”. In his speech, the Governor-General exhorted both French and Algerians to remain fixed solidly to the land, and to celebrate the “patriotism of the bell tower” and the “patriotism of the minaret”.[743] Even if such efforts provided a certain local effect, they did little to assuage the concerns of more politically engaged Algerians that Vichy could not match rhetoric with actions.

Yet Châtel’s speech also revealed another element of the Vichy-era appeal to Algerian Muslims. Like Abrial and Weygand before him, Châtel was a fervent Catholic, and thus hoped to speak to Muslims not as representatives of a secular state, but as believers. Despite admitting his lack of knowledge of Islam, even Pétain sought to present himself to Algerians as a Godly man. After meeting Pétain in June 1941, the Algerian National Councilor Ibnou Zekri wrote an article describing the head of state’s “infinite faith in God” and his desire to learn more about a faith he found similar to Christianity. Pétain’s message for Algerians was that “You will not be true Frenchmen unless you are true Muslims”.[744] In a conference in the same month, Pierre Mesnard, a philosophy professor at the University of Algiers, proclaimed his hope that by “showing the true face of Christian France”, the two communities could remain distinct while being “conscious

743 Ibid., Press clipping, “Colons et fellahs ont apporté au chef de la Colonie l’assurance de leur ténacité”.

744 AN-P, Microfiche 2AG 442, 16 4/4, *Informations Algériennes*, “En termes émouvantes M. Ibnou Zekri apprend aux Musulmans comment l’ont reçu l’Amiral Darlan et le Maréchal Pétain”, N. 57, 1 July 1941.

of their spiritual parentage."[745] French authorities even felt that it was a good idea to invite Muslims to participate in the 11 May 1942 national holiday for Joan of Arc. Though Pagès feared that Joan's sainthood could upset those following "pure Islam", he also felt that the Muslim members on a committee for the erection of a statue to the heroine in Blida was "an undeniable sign" of Islam's ability to evolve.[746] As for Christians accepting Islam, the Algiers prefect believed that Lyautey had established the doctrine of respect, and recognized that the conversion of mosques into churches during the conquest of Algeria still alienated Muslims, yet did not offer much in the way of meaningful steps to take to redress such grievances.[747]

Ramadan also served as an occasion for the administration to show its interest in aiding Muslims. In Algiers in 1941, the French hoped extra rations of sugar, semolina, gas, and electricity, as well as bans on gambling, singing, and dancing by women in public would cultivate more loyalty among Algerians. Though Pagès hoped that the occasion could also be used to pardon political prisoners, no action was authorized, to the disappointment of the Algerian population.[748]

When engaging Muslim religious figures, the administration had two broad choices. The first was to stick to the traditional intermediaries, commonly grouped by the French under the term *marabouts*. In rural areas, the marabouts represented local forms of

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745 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, Préfecture d'Alger, "L'activité indigène dans le department d'Alger", June 1941.
746 Ibid., May 1941.
747 Ibid., May 1942.
748 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, Préfecture d'Alger, "L'activité indigène dans le department d'Alger", September 1941.

Islam distinguished by idiosyncratic features according to the region. But by the Vichy period, service as mediators for the French had greatly diminished the authority of the marabouts in the eyes of many Algerians. In the 1930s, the ʿUlema, a group of reformers dedicated to modernizing Islam and purifying it from its local and historical accretions began to fill the void left by the marabouts. With the founding of the Association of Algerian Muslim ʿUlema in 1931, the reformist movement made steady gains thanks in large part to its leader ʿAbd al-Ḥamid Ben Badis, who adroitly combined religious reformism with Algerian nationalism. With the death of Ben Badis in 1940, the leadership of the Association fell to Bashir al-Ibrahimi, despite his being placed under house arrest by the administration in April.[749] While Ben Badis and al-Ibrahimi were based in Constantine and Oran respectively, another ʿUlema leader held sway in Algiers: Ṭayeb al-ʿUqbi (1890-1960). Yet unlike the others, al-ʿUqbi was more conciliatory to the French administration, generally taking more moderate positions than his companions throughout the 1930s, culminating in 1939 with his departure from the Association of ʿUlema he helped found. It is possible that after being accused of the murder of the Mufti of Algiers in 1936, a crime of which he was found innocent, al-ʿUqbi hoped to distance himself from a movement that the French authorities held in suspicion.[750] Though his softer approach kept him somewhat excluded from the mainstream of the ʿUlema movement, he still exercised a notable influence in Algiers, with his own paper, *al-Iṣlah*, and charity organization, al-Khayria.[751]

749 Ouanassa Siari, "1945-1962: vers l'indépendence" in *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période colonial*, p. 477
750 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme, vol. I.*, pp. 328, 335-336, 358, 441-443.
751 Cantier, *L'Algérie sous le régime de Vichy*, p. 279.

During the Vichy years, al-ʿUqbi hoped working with the new, authoritarian regime would lead to changes in favor of the reformist program for Algerian Islam. In October 1940, al-ʿUqbi wrote a heavily censured article calling for greater freedom of preaching and teaching for the ʿUlema, since only those authorized by the French could do so.[752] In December, al-ʿUqbi appealed to the pro-Catholic Vichy measures as a precedent for Islamic religious freedom in Algeria, demanding that the granting of "freedom for Catholic education" should be extended to the ʿUlema.[753] Though he had no success with this particular cause, which was dear to the ʿUlema, al-ʿUqbi continued to emphasize the religious values of the National Revolution as a means of aligning ʿUlema interests with those of the French administration. During a gathering of Algiers ʿUlema supporters in November 1941, al-ʿUqbi thanked the regime for banning the sale of alcohol to Algerian Muslims, and defended his relationship with the administration by pointing out that his organizations were helping indigent Algerians. Furthermore, the ʿUlema leader claimed that the New State "constituted the safe-guard of religion and Islamic traditions."[754]

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752 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, Préfecture d'Alger, "L'activité indigène dans le départment d'Alger", October 1940. Pagès, hoping to limit the success of al-ʿUqbi's call for reform, suggested being more lenient with authorizations, since the "quasi-dictatorial powers" of the administration would allow for a quick arrest to be made of any ʿUlema preaching against French interests. A month earlier, Pagès' predecessor Marc Chevalier sent out a circular recommending that the laws regulating Qurʾanic schools be interpreted loosely, particularly with regard to the number of students permitted to frequent lessons. Chevalier's main concerns were that the growing urban youth population would be more dangerous if left on the streets and that continued restrictions would harm the image of France in the eyes of Muslims. ANOM, Algérie, 91505/157, F. Ecoles Coraniques, N. 18.814, Chevalier to Mayors and Administrators, "Ecoles coraniques", 16 September 1940.

753 Ibid., December 1940.

754 Ibid., November 1941.

Not only could such statements put al-ʿUqbi on good terms with French authorities, they could also serve as a wedge between the administration and the marabouts. In the annual celebration for his al-Khayria organization, and in front of an audience of five thousand, al-ʿUqbi continued to highlight the similarities between Islam and the values of the National Revolution, while suggesting that Governor Châtel should not only visit marabout sites as a testament to his respect for Islam, but al-Khayria as well:

> The words spoken by Governor-General Châtel during his visit to the Zawiya of El-Hamel, are in our hearts, and we have a special gratitude for him. "Your religion", he said, "is not at all static, as we sometimes are made to believe. There is not a single text in the Qurʾan that condemns evolution. A Muslim can, without denying his faith, be as modern as a Catholic. Religion unites, it does not divide…" That, in effect, is the precise definition of Islam, as we have said for many years. I give grateful homage to the intellectual probity with which the Governor-General was able to, with these words, restore the true face of Islam, by removing the veil of superstitions, of ignorance, and prejudices with which others strive to mask it. Islam is, in effect, as we have always said, a religion of harmony, of progress, of civilization. As for us, we no longer want to recognize Orthodox, schismatics, or confraternity brothers, but just Muslims. Likewise, in the national framework, we only want to see the French all united, all free. Harmony, union, equality, this is what we call for and will not cease to call for; and we have faith that our venerable leader, Marshal Pétain, will grant us this, since this fraternal union, this equality without hesitation, is in his doctrine as it is in ours.[755]

By reading Châtel's description of Islam as an endorsement of the modernizing project of the ʿUlema, al-ʿUqbi hoped to push the administration away from the marabouts. Al-ʿUqbi also clearly rejected the racial aspects of Vichy policy by asserting his desire for equality in Algeria. The attempts to cozy up to the administration, even while maintaining a certain independence, were not limited to al-ʿUqbi's speeches and articles. On 9 October 1942, the students of the Belcourt ʿUlema school performed several scenes from Molière's *Les*

755 Ibid., May 1942.

Femmes Savantes in Arabic before an audience of eight hundred, including "high authorities". The evening concluded with the singing of the Vichy song, "Maréchal, nous voilà!".[756]

Despite al-ʿUqbi's willingness to work with the regime, and to publicly endorse its authoritarian and conservative values, his support was not uncritical. Not only did he unceasingly push for the loosening of the administration's grip on religious preaching and education, but he also refused to back Vichy's anti-Semitic legislation. For al-ʿUqbi, such racial legislation could only serve to strengthen the exclusionary policies and practices directed at Algerian Muslims. Though al-ʿUqbi could support certain Vichy values, any that threatened the equality of Muslims to the French was inadmissible. Consequently, al-ʿUqbi's relationship to the administration should be seen as a careful attempt to balance different possibilities of the National Revolution with the needs of his organization and followers in a time of extreme scarcity and harsh repression. Indeed, when defending his actions at an al-Khayria event, al-ʿUqbi pointed to the administration's helpful actions (out of 70,000 francs raised in a charity drive, Châtel and the Direction of Muslim Affairs had provided 15,000), and to his influence on the appreciated alcohol ban.[757]

Between Châtel's speeches and al-ʿUqbi's rhetoric supporting the values of the National Revolution, there seemed to be a possible point of convergence between Vichy officials and moderate ʿUlema. However, the lack of any strong action from the French,

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756 Ibid., October 1942.

757 ANOM, FM, 1AFFPOL/904/1, "Bulletin mensuel de presse indigène d'Algérie", February 1942.

either in the form of a liberalization of laws geared towards controlling Algerian Islam, or in a clear favoring of the modernizing project of the ʿUlema and a rejection of the marabouts, meant that little had changed. Though a figure like Pagès recognized that al-ʿUqbi was critical to the maintenance of order,[758] this, and not reform, was the primary goal of Vichy administrators. As such, beyond small measures like the ban on alcohol, the Catholic authorities who hoped to use religion as a point of contact with Algerians largely failed.

HARDY'S RURAL EDUCATION CENTERS

The task of educational reform was taken up by the Rector of the Académie d'Alger, Georges Hardy. An enthusiastic supporter of the National Revolution,[759] Hardy had long been a critic of French secular universalism in favor of recognizing local traditions and customs. Hardy's career as an educational director in French West Africa and director of Public Instruction in Morocco had given him ample time to formulate his rightist view of colonialism. Though Hardy rejected Orientalist views of North Africans, he also maintained that their unique culture and ways of life could account for the behavior of all North Africans. Furthermore, he asserted that Europeans could only understand the colonized through an intuitive understanding; any rational analysis would lead to false

758 ANOM, Algérie, 912/35, Préfecture d'Alger, "L'activité…", May 1942.

759 Hardy was an important player behind the anti-Semitic numerus clausus laws limiting the number of Jewish students in French schools, while also engaging in other ideologically driven activities, such as helping to prepare Muslim "messengers" through the Légion des anciens combattants to carry out propaganda from below.

analogies with Europe and a faith in possible assimilation.[760] For Hardy, non-European societies and cultures were completely incommensurable. Education then, would ideally conform to local needs. Instead of a universal European education that promised assimilation, Hardy advocated schools that focused on practical economic tasks and instilling strong moral values based on local traditions and religions.[761] With a Vichy regime that did not need to pay lip service to republican values of universalism, the Rector had a new opportunity to put his faith in educational policies in place.

Hardy presented his overall plan to address the Algerian education crisis to the Association of Muslim Students on 28 June 1941, secure in his knowledge that his program had already received the backing of Governor-General Abrial. Hardy faced a tall task as few Algerian children received an education; in 1936, only 17.2% of Algerian boys and 1.3% of girls frequented French schools, which were mostly concentrated in urban areas.[762] Hardy began by addressing several concerns of the Algerian students, arguing that the lack of schools was due to budget shortfalls, and not French disinterest in young Algerians. Since the current rate of educational expansion would take two centuries to provide all Algerians with a standardized education, Hardy suggested an alternative. The first step would be to ensure that all urban Algerians would be educated, since this was a site of potential social instability. Furthermore, he hoped that Qurʾanic schools would be

760 Spencer D. Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912-1956* (Lincoln, 2009), pp. 115-133.

761 Georges Hardy, *Nos grands problèmes coloniaux* (Paris, 1929), pp. 70-107.

762 Jean-Pierre Peyroulou, "1919-1944: l'essor de l'Algérie algérienne", in *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période coloniale*, p. 333

supported by the administration as long as they added French to their curriculums. The key to ensuring urban education was a restriction on migration from the over-populated countryside. To that end, Hardy moved to the heart of his proposal: the Rural Education Centers (Centres ruraux d'éducation, CRE).

The primary goal of the CRE was to slow down migration to the cities by improving the rural economy. As Hardy put it to his audience, "Undoubtedly it is necessary to teach him [the young rural] how to read and write, but it is above all necessary to fix him [l'enraciner] to the land that nourishes him." The danger with a comprehensive education was that "after five or six years of schooling, the children burn to use their knowledge. Too many of them, between the field and the desk lose the paternal tradition and are lost to society. This is not unique to Algeria…" For Hardy, it was imperative to employ a practical education to stem the tide surging towards the Algerian coast. Consequently, his plan called for the creation of four hundred CRE every year for fifty years, until rural Algeria was covered with a dense network that would provide a practical education for all while improving the rural economy. Costs would be kept down by eschewing proper school buildings and desks in favor of suitable existing buildings and carpets. Furthermore, the teachers would come from the cities, thus "reducing the number of unemployed intellectuals". Over time, the CRE would be converted into normal schools like those in the cities. Presumably, this process would only begin after fifty years. The emergency measure to contain the immediate social crisis would provide plenty of time for France to shore up its political strength. As a result, the CRE plan was a grand scheme to fix the Algerian social crisis that threatened the entire colonial system.

The establishment of a network of CRE schools would fit in nicely to the broader Vichy modernization project. Inspired by the need to either prepare France for entry into the war on the side of the Allies, or to find a place within a German-dominated Europe, Vichy leaders like Weygand and Darlan pushed for a large-scale industrialization of Algeria. The purpose, according to Weygand, would largely be political; only large-scale economic reforms would raise the living standards of Algerians and restore social stability. Industrialization did not mean that the regime hoped to attract Algerians to the cities, since one goal was to counter the growing Algerian population by drawing in French industrial workers to Algerian coastal cities. In terms of agricultural reform, the project of René Martin, a government engineer, proposed the expropriation of 20,000 hectares of land that would benefit from improved irrigation. Fifteen hundred Algerian families would then move on to 5000 hectares, with the rest reserved for 1000 French families. Yet even this small step took time to get off the ground, and was later shelved under the Allied-sponsored Governor Giraud, who judged it to be "antirepublican".[763] The CRE program offered an alternative approach to rural reform that relied less on direct state intervention, instead favoring education as a means of improving Algerian agricultural yields.

During his speech to Algerian students, Hardy also noted that the general idea of the CRE was not new, since an early attempt had occurred between 1908 and 1914, but without much support. Hardy himself had hoped to revive the idea in 1936, a "poorly

763 Daniel Lefeuvre, "Vichy et la modernisation de l'Algérie: Intention ou réalité?", *Vingtième Siècle*, N. 42 (April-June 1994), pp. 7-16; Cantier, *L'Algérie sous le régime de Vichy*, pp. 121-123.

chosen year" given the victory of the Popular Front and the brief hopes for a more progressive reform platform. But with Vichy authorities in place, Hardy's idea was well-received. The CRE's goal fit perfectly into the rural side of Vichy discourse, as Hardy demonstrated when he concluded by proclaiming that "We must renounce providing the habitual encyclopedic and theoretical education. The educational value of manual labor is recognized today. This way we will rediscover, as Marshal Pétain said, 'the solid virtues that have given the fatherland its strength and longevity'".[764] The Governor-General Abrial, who approved of the program, highlighted its suitability to Vichy goals by proclaiming that the two most important aspects of the CRE would be to "touch the masses, and not just the elites", and to "conserve, through improvements, the traditional way of life of the young rural."[765]

Experimental CRE got off to a shaky start. In the Mixed-Commune of Marnia, the administrator reported that construction of a suitable building was difficult since both labor and materials were lacking. Furthermore, the subsidy given by the Governor-General arrived late and did not cover the costs.[766] Similar problems plagued the Mixed-Commune of Nedroma, where the success of a first CRE was difficult to replicate.[767] Other practical issues arose. In the Commune of Aïn-Kial, the Mayor warned that housing the CRE three

764 ANOM, Algérie, Préfecture d'Alger, 912/35, Annex to June 1941 report, "Le problème scolaire indigène en Algérie", 28 June 1941.
765 ANOM, Préfecture d'Oran, 1H/108, F. Centres ruraux d'éducation pour les indigènes, Abrial to Prefect of Oran, "Centre d'Education rurale", 8 February 1941.
766 Ibid., N. 5856, Administrator of Mixed-Commune of Marnia to Prefect of Oran, 11 August 1942.
767 Ibid., N. 3595, Administrator of Mixed-Commune of Nédroma to Prefect of Oran, 11 August 1942.

kilometers away from the village, presumably to take advantage of the plot of land available to the school, would prevent many from attending.[768] Governor-General Châtel tried to put the lack of resources in perspective, instructing that the facilities should be as simple as possible, so as not to tempt students to "leave their village, their family, and the agricultural work that must be theirs."[769] And though Châtel instructed mayors and administrators to find resources and labor wherever possible, and according to local possibilities,[770] the establishment of new CRE encountered far more obstacles than Hardy predicted. Indeed, while Hardy's original plan called for the annual creation of four hundred CRE, by September 1942, only ninety-three had opened.[771] Meanwhile, al-ʿUqbi, who had met with Hardy personally in 1941 to discuss educational reforms, and who supported the CRE program, wrote in *al-Iṣlah* that the reform had so far remained just a project before exclaiming that "there must finally be actions."[772] The failure of the CRE demonstrates the inability of the French administration to carry out a large-scale reform that was highly-suited to Vichy principles. But there were still other tools to win over Algerian youth, who served as a natural political target for rightist figures who for years had taken an interest in the role of youth groups as ideological training grounds.

768 Ibid., N. 1436, Mayor of Commune of Aïn-Kial to Prefect of Oran, 24 August 1942.
769 Ibid., N.464, Châtel to Prefect of Oran, 8 February 1942.
770 Ibid., N. 8646, Circular, Prefect of Oran to Mayors and Administrators of Oran Dept., 29 July 1942.
771 Cantier, *L'Algérie*, p. 118.
772 ANOM, Préfecture d'Oran, 912/35, "L'activité indigène dans le départment d'Alger", September 1942.

CONTROLLING ALGERIAN NATIONALISM: THE SCOUT MOVEMENT

French scout groups that emphasized discipline, community, sacrifice, work, and patriotism served as useful resources for Vichy. Yet Muslim scout groups constituted a critical field of nationalist contestation in Vichy Algeria. The same values in such groups could be employed to promote Algerian, not French patriotism. As Kaddache writes, "the [scout] movement had a clear political dimension, for scouts implicitly offered the observation of Islamic principles and 'fidelity to country', in short to nationalism…"[773] And for colonial administrators, the number of those involved was not insignificant: by June 1941, the number of Muslim scouts was estimated to fall between 2500 and 3000, including around 400 belonging to pro-French groups. For those in the Direction of Muslim Affairs, all the other organizations were, "a simple instrument in the hands of political parties, keen on using the most modern and proven means of propaganda." [774] French administrators understood they were in a bind: taking direct control of Algerian scout groups would alienate most participants, while suppressing them would create new forms of an "exacerbated nationalism".[775]

The visiting representative for the Scouts de France, André Noël, offered a proposal for integrating Muslim scouts into French organizations through a unified French North African scout institution. However, French Algerian officials shot down the plan, fearing

773 Kaddache, "Les scouts musulmans algériens, creuset du nationalisme", in *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période coloniale*, p. 447.
774 ANOM, Département d'Oran, 5I/91, F. Scouts-Musulmans, "Scoutisme Musulman: Plan d'action", 10 June 1941.
775 ANOM, Département d'Oran, 5I/91, F. Scouts-Musulmans, "Projet d'organisation du Scoutisme Musulman en Algérie", 25 March 1941.

that unifying Muslim scout groups across North Africa would lead to greater political instability. Even allowing for such a concentration in Algeria was considered dangerous. The competing plan argued for local interactions in order to ensure that scout leaders were loyal and willing to slowly integrate their groups into larger French organizations. Loyal groups would be encouraged not by the administration, but by Algerians as intermediaries.[776] This second plan, more cautious and flexible, was the favored method for dealing with Algerian scout groups for the remainder of the Vichy period. French records from the Department of Oran indicate that the application of such a program was far from simple for French administrators, with ample opportunities for a variety of political actors to make competing claims.

In the department of Oran, there were two competing Algerian scout organizations. The larger of the two, the Scouts Musulmans Algériens (SMA), under the larger Fédération des Scouts Musulmans Algériens, caused considerable concern among the French. In May 1941, the French executed the head of the Federation, Muhammad Bourras, for passing sensitive documents on to German officials while on a trip to Vichy to learn about scout organizations.[777] A new bureau sought to calm French fears by placing the trusted loyalist and National Councilor, Abderrahmane Boukerdenna as president, with the respected moderate reformer Ferhat Abbas as vice-president. The Algiers prefecture was not so confident, calling Boukerdenna a means of "covering" the organization from the administration, since the councilor allegedly had "neither the taste, nor the pleasure to

776 Ibid., "Scoutisme Musulman: Plan d'action", 10 June 1941.
777 Cantier, *L'Algérie sous le régime de Vichy*, p. 302.

occupy himself, even from afar, with the Muslim Scouts".[778] Likewise, the administration in Oran was wary of the Federation's SMA groups in Oran, Tlemcen, Marnia, Nedroma, and Mascara, with a total membership of around 260. The competing group, the Eclaireurs Musulmans Algériens (EMA) appeared more apolitical to the administration, and met with more support, though it only had one group of 80 members in Oran.[779]

The SMA and EMA competed in the city of Oran, with French administrators trying to figure out if either could be loyal. In May 1941, the EMA accused the SMA of getting some of their members drunk so as to steal the keys to their meeting place and telling other EMA members that their group has been dissolved. More seriously, the Vice-President of the EMA group, Aberrahmane Mehani warned the police that the local SMA leaders were PPA activists. Given French fears that even innocuous organizations likely harbored nationalist intentions, they sought to be careful in choosing sides. Mehani himself was a member of the fascist PPF, though he claimed he was not using the EMA as a vehicle for PPF propaganda, but simply to counter the PPA.[780] Though the French believed Mehani, some Muslims were suspicious of his PPF past. One rejected a recruitment attempt since he thought Mehani's group "must have a political goal" as a result of his PPF connections.[781] The other Oran EMA leader, Bashir Merad Boudia, was a former PPA member. In order to convince authorities of his loyalty, Merad Boudia wrote a letter to

778 Ibid., N. 784, C.I.E., "Renseignements: Scouts Musulmans Algériens", 9 July 1941.
779 ANOM, Département d'Oran, 5I/91, F. Scouts musulmans", N, 217, C.I.E., "Scoutisme Musulman en Oranie", 1 June 1941.
780 ANOM, Département d'Oran, 5I/91, F. Scouts-Musulmans, Commissaire de Police to Capitaine Lafitte, 12 June 1941.
781 Ibid., N. 124, "Ingérence du P.P.F. dans les E.M.A. d'Oran", 19 November 1941.

Governor-General Abrial in which he confessed his mistakes and recounted his conversion to the "National Revolution" since Pétain would help people "without distinctions of race and religion". According to Merad Boudia, his former PPA associates sent him death threats thanks to his support of the pro-French EMA.[782] Perhaps because of such professions of loyalty, coupled with the EMA's position against the PPA, the French were inclined to provide a small and secret gift of 1000 francs. Such support had little effect though, as the Oran EMA group was riven by internal squabbles between Mehani and Merad Boudia. By the summer of 1942, the French officer responsible for overseeing the group decided that support had to be withdrawn until they could be more sure of the EMA's effectiveness and of their loyalty.[783]

Even the SMA contested the notion that they served as a training ground for nationalists. In a circular in February 1942, the Federation heads defended their group, arguing that they had dismissed several controversial members and highlighted some of the songs sung by their members, including ones dedicated to service, Muhammad, and to Pétain.[784] An intercepted letter from an SMA member in Marnia shows that the group wrote pro-French campfire scenes to be acted out.[785] Such efforts to paint the SMA as a manifestation of Pétainist values did not assuage French fears. In Tlemcen, a particularly strong SMA group, called "al-Mansourah" (Victorious), inspired an effort by the French

782 ANOM, Département d'Oran, 5I/91, F. Scouts Musulmans, Bachir Merad Boudia to Abrial, 15 May 1941.
783 Ibid., N. 399, C.I.E., "A/S du groupement scout des éclaireurs musulans algériens d'Oran", 27 July 1942.
784 Ibid., F. Scouts-Musulmans, Lettre Circulaire N. 109, 1 February 1942.
785 Ibid., N. 1900, "Etat d'esprit chez les Scouts Musulmans", 10 July 1942.

Orientalist Philippe Marçais to create an alternative organization that would rest firmly in French hands. The al-Mansourah group even held an event at the municipal stadium with French administrators and scouts present in order to build trust. After "patriotic speeches", and songs in Arabic, the troop performed several short scenes, one of which attacked the hazards of drinking, a theme that would have pleased Vichy administrators after their ban on alcohol for Algerians.[786] But the French nevertheless believed the group supported the PPA; such suspicions appeared to be confirmed when leaders were told to teach members about "the conquest of Algeria by French imperialism".[787] As such, claims to loyalty no longer held much weight with the French. In a report on al-Mansourah based on Marçais' analysis, Muslim scouts were said to seemingly form in "the framework of the National Revolution which bases its hopes on youth" while appearing "impartial, honest, and properly French." Yet their leaders were the same figures that espoused Algerian nationalism in movements that "the New France no longer wants".[788] As a result, more direct efforts had to be made to intervene and remove nationalist influences.

In Tlemcen, Marçais helped create a new loyalist scout group, chosen among local students. The most promising went to a leadership camp at al-Riath, so as to serve as pro-French scout leaders in the future. After a year of competing with al-Mansourah, Marçais and others hoped to raise the membership of their group to forty, while starting similar

786 Ibid., N. 372, "Visite à Tlemcen de El Foul Sadek et Boubrit", 22 July 1941.
787 Ibid., N. 34, "Camp regional d'Ain-Fezza", 24 January 1942.
788 ANOM, Départment d'Oran, 5I/91, F. Scouts Musulmans, N. 564, C.I.E., "A/S du groupement scout "El Mansourah" de Tlemcen", 22 November 1941.

groups in other towns in Oran.[789] An attempt by al-Mansourah to create a branch in Nedroma largely failed, as the local administration placed several Europeans on the committee to watch over their practices. By late 1942, the small group was isolated from outside influences and entirely under French control.[790] Furthermore, three of its best members were to be invited to al-Riath.[791] By sending loyal Muslims to al-Riath for training, the French hoped to create a new, technically trained scout leadership that would replace that of nationalists. When the president of the SMA federation suggested four members from Oran to attend, two were rejected for being "politically suspect".[792] French administrators hoped then that new leadership, coupled with administrative supervision would moderate or eliminate nationalist tendencies.

This was a difficult strategy to enact. In Lourmel, Algerians lobbying for the creation of a scout group ran into the opposition of the mayor. The chief administrator, fearing a radicalization of the youth if their demands were rejected, worked with the Direction of Muslim Affairs in Oran to assist the budding scouts despite the wishes of the mayor. The new group was then strictly controlled by administrators and associated with a local Catholic scout group instead of the SMA or EMA federations.[793] Yet by January 1942, the president of the newly constituted group had already resigned, citing "as much

789 Ibid., N. 532, "A/S de la troupe scoute musulmane créée à Tlemcen par M. Cordel directeur de l'école professionnelle de Tlemcen-Gare", 1 October 1942.
790 Ibid., N. 995, Commune-Mixte-Nédroma to Sub-Prefect Tlemcen, "Scoutisme musulman", 23 September 1942.
791 Ibid., N. 536, C.I.E. Oran, to Administrator Nédroma, 12 October 1942.
792 Ibid., N. 375, C.I.E. Oran to Comandant Courtes, Algiers, 11 July 1942.
793 Ibid., F. Scoutisme Musulman Arrondissement d'Oran, Assistant Administrator-Lournmel to Captain, CIE Oran, "Scouts musulmans de Lourmel", 4 December 1941.

discouragement in the results as in Muslim morality".[794] In the case of Lourmel, the assistance of the French could not inspire the same lively spirit that animated the more nationalist scout groups such as al-Mansourah.

Vichy attempts to control scout groups therefore proved to be a cat-and-mouse game wherein pro-French and pro-Algerian groups attempted to work within their political and discursive limitations while positioning their organizations as the most influential. And while the French could claim a certain degree of success in forcing the more nationalist groups to often outwardly expound upon the virtues of the National Revolution, they were largely unable to gain control of such groups. There was, however, one last means of forming a substantial group of pro-French, Algerian youth.

TRAINING YOUTH: THE CHANTIERS DE JEUNESSE

The Chantiers de Jeunesse, or Youth Camps, was a prominent Vichy program aimed at instilling the values of work, military discipline, camaraderie, and sacrifice into French youth. Service was a requirement for French youth, who lived out in the countryside, engaging in farming and forestry work for periods of up to eight months. Only days after the 18 January 1941 law establishing the Chantiers de Jeunesse in Algeria, the question of a possible extension to North African Muslims became an important issue.[795] On 24 March 1941, a commission to study the inclusion of Algerians in the Chantiers met. Led by Augustin Berque, one of Vichy's foremost experts on Muslim policy, the

794 Ibid., Mohammed Omar Ould to Administrator-Lourmel, 4 February 1942.

795 ANOM, GGA, ALG 9H/39, "Le Commissaire Regional Van Hecke à M. le Gouverneur General d'Algérie", N. 8/D, 31 January, 1941.

commission sought to establish the foundations for an effective *encadrement* of young Algerians into a prized institution of the National Revolution. Its report highlighted the need for caution, since, as the commission reported, "in Muslim countries, every innovation must be a success". In contrast to French youth, Algerians would be asked to join voluntarily instead of by compulsion. Those that accepted would then be split up into two groups: "evolués" incorporated with the French, and "la masse" of fellahs and artisans. Though the former would not come from cities, given the prevalence of anti-French sentiment in urban spaces, they would be expected to understand the true meaning of the Chantiers as a social institution. For the rural participants, the experience would serve to teach more modern economic techniques; "to ameliorate their quality of life without uprooting them". A strict surveillance of the operation would be carried out by French administrators and loyal Algerian veterans.[796]

Shortly after, the Algerian Governor General Abrial summed up the commission's findings to Admiral Darlan, putting particular emphasis on the fact that the Chantiers "must not uproot the indigène and tear him from his previous life. On the contrary, it is through the return or retention in their milieu of the youth shaped by our methods that our actions will bear fruit".[797] This form of Algerian education would be strictly in line with Vichy values. A month later, Weygand stressed the limited and experimental nature of the project

796 AN-P, AJ 36/69, "Note pour M. le Directeur du Cabinet de M. Le Gouverneur Général" N. 440, 27 March 1941.
797 Ibid., "Le Gouverneur General de l'Algerie à Monseur L'amiral de la Flotte" N. 540, 11 April 1941.

to Pétain, hoping the proposed decree could be passed quickly.[798] At the same time, the Minister of National Education and Youth, Jérôme Carcopino suggested that if successful, the program could be extended to 60,000 to 80,000 Algerians, and that a specific school to train a small cadre of Algerians to be Chantier leaders should be established.[799]

Despite these early conversations, almost a full year passed before a decree finally extended the Chantiers to Algerians. With the new Governor General, Yves Châtel, the program finally moved towards implementation. A commission led by Châtel and the head of the CdJ, General de la Porte du Theil met in May 1942 to establish a schedule and basic norms. Starting in July 1942, 55 volunteers would spend three months at the Ecole des Chefs in Fort-de-l'Eau in order to take on leadership positions. The members of this camp, and other smaller leadership training programs, would largely be chosen among college educated Algerians and sons of loyal qaḍis.[800] At the same time, another hundred volunteers would begin an eight-month stage along with French youth. These in turn would be shifted to leadership roles in the Chantier groups for 1400 rural Algerians in October.[801]

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798 Ibid., "Le General Commandant en Chef Weygand à Monsieur le Maréchal de France", N. 2.385, 15 May 1941.

799 Ibid., "Rapport sur la formation des groupements indigènes", Secrétariat d'Etat à l'éducation nationale et à la jeunesse. Carcopino also suggested that if the Germans had any problems with the inclusion of Algerians, the expansion could be framed as aiding the Eurafrica project. "Le Secretaire d'Etat à l'Education Nationale et à la Jeunesse à Monsieur le Ministre Secrétaire d'Etat à l'Interieur" N. 2.274.

800 ANOM, Préfecture de Constantine B/3/678, F. Chantiers de la Jeunesse Musulmans, "Listes d'adresses de jeunes musulmans pouvant être invités à effectuer un stage d'information à l'école de Fort-de-l'Eau", 24 April 1942.

801 ANOM, 92501, Commune de Marnia //30, "Le Gouverneur General de l'Algerie à Messieurs les Préfets", N. 1395, 5 June 1942. AN, AJ 36/69, "Note concernant l'organisation des chantiers musulmans en Algérie", N. 548 D/1, 20 May 1942.

With such a schedule, the program could be initiated in a conservative and tightly controlled manner before being expanded to all Algerian youth. Other preparatory notes asserted the importance of the Chantiers as a means of indoctrinating young Algerian intellectuals and elites into the values of the National Revolution, since they were the most likely to initiate and spread anti-French propaganda, as well as the need to avoid charges of favoring Algerian Jews over Muslims, since the former already had a special Chantiers group in Djidjelli.[802]

Though the plan for the Muslim Chantiers was still in its infancy when the Allied occupation ended Vichy's North African influence, the early preparation stages can still give us an idea of how Vichy intended to form an Algerian elite while keeping "the masses" tied to the land. One of its central challenges was employing Islam as a traditional rather than a nationalist force. The careful balance began with the name of the organization: in June 1942 the regional CdJ commissar expressed concern to Châtel that "Chantiers Indigènes" was too pejorative, while the inclusion of the word "Muslim" would "emphasize a religious character that is possibly not in our interest to underline", while excluding those in the group that may not be Muslim. Châtel therefore imposed the appellation of "Chantiers de la Jeunesse Francaise, Groupement musulman".[803] While planners expected to provide Imams and respect Islamic traditions regarding food, the

802 ANOM, GGA, Algérie, 9H/39, "Note sur les Chantiers musulmans", "Note", 20 February 1942.

803 ANOM, GGA, Algérie, 9H/39, "Au sujet de la dénomination des Chantiers Musulmans", 19 June 1942, "Le Gouverneur General à M. le Commissaire Régional des Chantiers de la Jeunesse de l'Afrique du Nord"

value system would focus on the standard Vichy concerns: virility, loyalty, patriotism, camaraderie, discipline. The distinction between French and Algerian groups had to rest on religion, since doing so by race would be politically unsound. At the same time, focusing on religion could play into the hands of the feared Pan-Islamic nationalists. As a result, the administration had to limit religion to a largely symbolic role in the camps. The decision to create a separate camp regimen for Algerians did not sit well with many, including those willing to work with the Vichy regime. One Algerian in Oran, after many consultations, recommended that urban Algerians be included as equals with the French, while the rural camps could be separate since their goal was to create a skilled rural elite while also extending a weak educational system.[804] Informants reported that while most Algerians were indifferent to the news of the Chantiers program, the educated youth were disillusioned by yet another sign that the French regime was unwilling to treat them as equals.[805]

An early experiment in training Algerian elites seems to have gone smoothly enough: thirty-five Algerians gathered at El-Riath for two weeks in the summer of 1941 where they experienced an education focusing on sports and athleticism, agriculture, and the values of the "National Revolution". An intercepted letter by one participant must have pleased French police, as the young Algerian spoke enthusiastically of a "spirit of

804 ANOM, Départment d'Oran 5I/91, F. Chantiers de jeunesse, "Note de Monsieur Dji Taleb: Les camps de Jeunesse et les Musulmans", 15 March 1941.

805 Ibid., "Renseignment: Extension aux musulmans de la loi sur les Chantiers de Jeunesse", 11 May 1942.

camaraderie pushed to its highest degree as we truly feel ourselves to be a family".[806] The more comprehensive leadership camps that began in 1942 dealt more fully with the question of how to balance respecting Algerians while placing them firmly under nationalistic French influence. A guide to a training period running from November 1942 to January 1943 provides some clues as to what compromises were made. Over the training period, participants would undergo 415 hours of education, of which 64 were dedicated to Arabic. The subjects of Muslim sociology, Arab literature, Arab History and Muslim Art, and Islam in the World combined for another 46 hours. In order to ensure that such lessons did not detract too greatly from French influence, 22 hours were assigned to subjects relating to the French Empire and its greatest figures. The assignment of French Algerian Orientalists such as Philippe Marçais and Georges-Henri Bousquet to teach several conferences demonstrates the perceived importance of the Algerian elite camp.[807] Though someone like Marçais could have a sincere interest in protecting Islam, it is notable that Algerian experts only served as guest speakers, on subjects like the "mission of Muslim intellectual elites" by a member of the National Council, Ibnou Zekri, and "France in the Hejaz and the Pilgrimage".[808]

Thanks to a collection of intercepted letters from both French and Algerian camp participants, it is possible to see how the Chantiers functioned as a tool of social and

806 ANOM, Département d'Oran 5I/91, F. Ecole des cadres à El Riath, N. 3.464, "Opinion sur l'Ecole des Cadres d'El Riath", 28 July 1941.

807 A less well-known figure at the time, Louis Joxe, was also scheduled to teach. Later, as a Gaullist, he would negotiate with the FLN at the end of the Algerian War.

808 ANOM, GGA, Algérie, 9H/39, Ecole Regionale de Chefs des Chantiers de la Jeunesse de l'Afrique du Nord, Fort-de-L'eau, Stage de Formation Islamique, October 1942.

political cohesion under the aegis of the National Revolution. Expectations among the French youth were high. One believed that by "suffusing Muslim youth with French spirit… it appears we are opening the most important page in the last one hundred years of Algerian history."[809] After a few days the responses were more mixed. Emile Riboute wrote that "our first contact with the Muslims was quite nice…and we can hope to work together well." Another French participant was less enthusiastic, remarking that "Our Muslim comrades are not disagreeable people, but as time passes one tends to find them inferior".[810] Although French Algerians were stationed somewhat apart from the Algerians and metropolitan French, some were quite opposed to Algerian participation. One was concerned that "they always want to steal, and we now have to watch over our things", while another was confident that the "very soft" metropolitans would "soon understand their race" once in contact with Algerians.[811]

Even among the metropolitan French, many of whom hoped to establish good relations with the Algerians, results were mixed. One youth thought the Algerians "altogether quite swell comrades. One of them who often receives provisions shares them with us". Another was perplexed at studying "such a bizarre mentality", while others were more forthright in their negative assessments. One determined that "their race has many flaws", while another remarked that they were inveterate liars. More thoughtful evaluations came from a certain Charrier, who explained that "with the Muslims all is going well. They

809 ANOM, GGA, Algérie, 9H/39, F. Chantiers de Jeunesse 1941-1942, N. 7339, "Chantier de Jeunesse de Duperre", 11 September 1942.
810 Ibid., N. 7363, "Chantier de Jeunesse N. 107", 10 September 1942.
811 Ibid., N. 7267, "Chantier de Jeunesse de Duperre", 7 September 1942.

are rather withdrawn, but are quite agreeable with us despite everything, since they understand that we have something to teach them." Charrier then expressed a fear that the controlled homo-erotic nature of camp culture would be lost on the Algerians, writing that "Evidently we cannot treat them with great camaraderie, as they are very sexual types and the worst catastrophes would occur."[812] Yet, Charrier was also impressed by the Algerians' religious dedication, calling them "determined believers" whose religion was "not as bad as one often says".[813]

One strategy of the French youth was to strongly assert their hierarchical authority. Bonelli, a camp leader from Marseille charged with helping to train Algerians, sent a letter to his parents summarizing his opinions. Bonelli believed that he had to gain their respect through fair treatment and unquestionable moral values, since the "Arab watches, and is on the lookout for the smallest gesture…justice is sacred in their eyes…ninety-nine good acts are annulled by a bad one, rendering work difficult for us metropolitans." As a result, Bonelli believed that a show of "moral superiority", as well as "firm discipline" was necessary to maintain his authority over the Algerian youth. Yet he also admitted that "the Arab called 'évolué' remains 'man', with all his faculties, his soul, and his heart", and complained that those who lacked respect for Algerians risked viewing the French as superior in every area.[814]

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812 Ibid., N. 7339, "Chantier de Jeunesse de Duperre", 4 September 1942.

813 ANOM, GGA, Algérie, 9H/39, F. Chantiers de Jeunesse 1941-1942, N. 8169, "Chantier de Jeunesse N. 107", 6 October 1942.

814 Ibid., F. Chef d'équipe, N. 8373, "Jugement sur les "jeunes indigènes", 10 October 1942.

Despite figures like Bonelli and Charrier who appear to have desired fair treatment, others found that the experience proved the necessity of French domination. One metropolitan French participant wrote that "putting Muslims on the same level of equality as the metropolitans is an error. Why? Because they are excessively proud, and in a short time, will believe themselves superior to us. Fortunately, by our conduct and dynamism, we greatly outclass them, but they are too proud to recognize it. I think that it would be to our advantage to follow the example of British colonization: that of oppression, since every concession will be seen as weakness in their eyes."[815] It was common to question the possibility of inculcating French ways of life into the Algerians. One believed that his Algerian team members "took what is bad from civilization and left the good", while another complained that the Algerians showed their disrespect by making fun of the French in Arabic behind their backs.[816] The fact that only educated Algerians, along with sons of qaḍis had been chosen could also prove discouraging for the French, as one wondered what the rural, uneducated Algerians who would attend future camps would be like given the behavior of the "elites".[817]

For all the faults the French youth attributed to the Algerians, they did not accuse them of rejecting the values of the National Revolution. Indeed, Pierre Forcy believed that they regarded Pétain "as a father and much more so than the French from France."[818]

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815 Ibid., F. Chantiers de Jeunesse 1941-1942, N. 7890, "Jugement sur les musulmans des chantiers de jeunesse", 29 September 1942.

816 Ibid., N. 7958, "Chantier de Jeunesse 107", 11 October 1942.

817 Ibid., N. 7887, "divers du Chantier de jeunesse N. 107", 29 September 1942.

818 Ibid., "Sympathie entre musulmans et français métropolitains", 7 September 1942.

Perhaps because the Algerians came from families historically loyal to France, or because they understood the possibility of their letters being censored, some wrote about their experiences in glowing terms that echoed Vichy propaganda. One participant wrote that "Today the Marshal, our great leader turns to us Muslims; he wants us to be at the side of the French youth, our comrades, so we can help heal the wounds of our dear France."[819] Another Algerian wrote to a friend that the experience was "in short, a school of hardiness, one that fortifies deficient characters and provides a unifying spirit that awakens feelings for the flag and of patriotism that for several years have been done away with by almost all the former political movements".[820] Ben Habib appreciated the goals of the camp and believed it was working as intended: "When I leave here, I will be a new man, stronger than I once was, physically and morally."[821] It is likely that a certain number of Algerians bought into the program and sought to make the most out of it.

The Algerian youth also expressed positive views of the metropolitan French. Several wrote that they felt like they had a "second family", and that the leaders were good and fair.[822] Said Akli even shared the negative French evaluations by complaining that "all the indigènes…are more or less slackers, who will make poor team leaders."[823] Some struggled in the camps though. A member of one of the first camps, in Group 103

819 Ibid., N. 3.079/TB, "Opinion d'un indigène sur les chantiers de jeunesse musulmane", 30 August 1942.
820 Ibid., N. 7905, "Jugement sur les chantiers de jeunesse de la part d'un indigène", 30 September 1942.
821 Ibid., N. 7339, "Chantier de Jeunesse de Duperre", 11 September 1942.
822 Ibid., N. 7267, "Chantiers de jeunesse de Duperre", 17 September 1942.
823 Ibid., N. 8292, "Chantiers de Jeunesse N. 107", 15 October 1942.

complained about harsh conditions and likened his status to that of a prisoner.[824] Mustapha Boutaiba wrote to a friend that "You've done well not coming to the chantiers with us. It's worse than a penal colony. I regret what I've done…We work with shovels and pickaxes like convicts."[825] Belkacem Bahloul wrote that "I am almost always sad…I'm always thinking about home."[826] Another with clear symptoms of depression was pushed to the edge by the experience: "Everyone, all the youth are happy. I alone am sad…I'm alone and am going to kill myself. Alas! You will never see me again!"[827]

While the participants' letters from Duperre indicated that the experience was mostly a success, other camps for Muslims were less successful. A report on Group 107 written in January 1943, a few months after the end of Vichy Algeria, judged the overall project a failure. While the Duperre camp ran with few problems, the absorption of rural Algerians into a camp at Rouina encountered difficulties. The French team leaders struggled with Algerians who knew little French, and not enough Algerians had been promoted to solve the language problem. Those Algerians who had attended sessions at Fort-de-l'Eau were upset that they were so often passed over for leadership positions.[828]

824 ANOM, Départment d'Oran, 5I/91, F. Chantiers de Jeunesse, N. 3.254, "Camps de Jeunesse-Opinion sur les chantiers de jeuness", 10 July 1941.
825 ANOM, GGA, Algérie, 9H/39, F. Chantiers de jeunesse 1941-1942., "Chantiers de Jeunesse 107-Défavorable aux Chantiers", 7 September 1942.
826 Ibid., N. 7363, "Chantier de Jeunesse N. 107", 10 September 1942.
827 Ibid., N. 7990, "Dépression morale chez jeune indigène parlant de suicide", 2 October 1942.
828 Ibid., F. Chantiers de jeunesse (musulmans) 1941-1943, "Rapport sur les chantiers musulmans algériens de la Jeunesse en Afrique du Nord", 26 January 1943.

CONCLUSION

The attempt by the French Algerian colonial government to instill the values of the National Revolution was largely a failure. Settlers who were glad to see the enemies of the Popular Front come to power were nevertheless disappointed that harsher measures were not employed against Algerians. Any attempt to alter the status-quo in favor of Algerians therefore would still run into massive settler opposition, even if the administrative higher-ups were long-time rightists. And even when the administration had a free-hand to engage in its vision for reform, as with Hardy's educational plan, a lack of resources and a plethora of local obstructions prevented significant progress.

On the other hand, the regime did find a surprising number of potential Algerian mediators among both the traditionally conservative pro-French and reformers. Yet even when the latter were willing to walk a certain distance along the path of the National Revolution, their pre-war claims for political, social, and religious equality never disappeared. As a result, even Algerian discourse favorable to certain Vichy values still challenged the racial and exclusionary nature of the French authoritarian turn. Even a valued mediator like al-ʿUqbi could not countenance the anti-Semitic policies implemented during the Vichy years and made his dissatisfaction known.

Finally, the attempt to mollify all the Algerian social forces deemed to be moderate led Vichy officials to waver between calling for a special regime for Algerian Muslims or for establishing greater equality. The ensuing tensions were visible in the regime's treatment of traditional and reformist Muslims, and in its attempt to create new ideological organizations that would simultaneously politicize and de-politicize Algerian youth.

Regime officials failed to square the circle of elevating Algerians to the level of Europeans while leaving them to a special legal and civil status that excluded them from fully equal membership in a renovated French Empire. The sporadic and half-hearted efforts to do so eventually convinced almost all the regime's interlocutors that the far-right's program of authoritarian reform was an even bigger failure than that of the Popular Front. While the radical fascist Parti Populaire Français had failed to convince Algerians that a complete rejection of assimilation was in the best interest of both French and Algerians, the rightists of Vichy could not sell their confused vision which ultimately boiled down to a set of values, such as religion, order, discipline, and sacrifice, that could easily be appropriated by others for different purposes.

Conclusion

Fascist imperialism, true to Carl Schmitt's belief, was intensly interested in particular spaces, spaces laden with races, ethnicities, histories, cultures, and religious beliefs. Whereas the Nazis applied a strategy of brute-force in the construction of their Eastern Empire, French and Italian fascists sought to manipulate the histories, the traditions, and the peoples of the Mediterranean so as to justify the expansion or maintenance of their imperial states. Given the internally fractious character of fascism and affiliated right-wing movements, the means by which this would be achieved was a constant point of contention. The multiplicity of rightist conceptions of the Mediterranean ensured that clear friend-enemy distinctions would be difficult to establish outside national borders. French and Italian rightists ditched Latin unity for their own national empires, European chauvinists clashed with Muslim symphasizers, and metropolitan fascists struggled with settler conservatism and racism towards North Africans. Though Schmitt believed great political spaces could be unified through a shared culture, the fascists encountered tremendous difficulties in enacting such a geopolitical order.

Yet some strategies of Italian and French fascist imperialism were clear: Muslims would supposedly ally with similarly spiritual fascists and authoritarian Catholics against capitalist plutocracy and Judeo-Bolshevism. In order to appeal to Islam, fascists were ready to support both reformist and traditional Islamic groups so long as neither questioned European sovereignty, which would re-assert itself through a new vision of the "civilizing mission"; this time stripped of the possibility of assimilation, and intensified by greater economic intervention from an authoritarian/totalitarian state. While most Muslims would

remain in a modernized countryside, the remaining elites would go through fascist-type schooling and integration. The basis for such a view came from the belief that the rebirth of Islam was more important to Arabs and Muslims than national sovereignty. Encouraged by Orientalists, and inspired by the failure of the French Popular Front to proceed with an "assimilationist" policy, fascists chose to downplay Arab nationalism in North Africa (with the exception of Egypt) at their peril.

But as Ernst Jünger predicted, the colonized, far from welcoming a program that professed to respect Islam while refusing North African national identities, preferred to demand liberal rights and national self-determination. The fascists also had few resources to carry out their projects, which greatly limited their promise to bring vast economic and social improvements in lieu of political rights. Furthermore, in the case of Italy, the late 1930s racial policies prevented projects of fascist integration from functioning as they adequately did in Italy. As a result, North Africans had few reasons to acquiesce to the fascist project, which rested on a fundamental basis of violence, whether real or threatened. Algerians rejected the Parti Populaire Français' platform, just as Tunisians dismissed Italian claims to rule their country. Many of those North Africans who embraced or sympathized with fascism often did so for their own reasons, and not to participate in the fascist imperial structures as second-class citizens. Even a truly fascist North African, the Algerian Mohamed el-Maadi, envisioned a larger role for Algerians in the fascist geopolitical New Order than any European would likely allow.

Both the French and Italian visions of a fascist empire crumbled with Axis military defeats in World War II. The short-lived experiments had proven to be a failure, but

demonstrated the complex ways in which fascists could negotiate transnational and imperial spaces in the attempt to build geopolitical “great spaces”. While the grandiose ambitions and lackluster results give these efforts an air of absurdity in retrospect, it is important to take into account how seriously the project was taken by fascists, and how many lives were lost or irreparably damaged, particularly in the Italian case, to forge a fascist empire. The experience should also remind us that right-wing movements can quickly spill over the borders they are so eager to protect. Once beyond their national frontiers in search of new friends and enemies, new futures and pasts, new hierarchies and victims, the far-right may yet surprise us again.

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